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White Bodies, Black Voices: The Linguistic Construction of Racialized Authenticity in US Film

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White Bodies, Black Voices: The Linguistic Construction of Racialized Authenticity in US Film

by

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Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2012

Dedication

For my mom who always believed in me. Rest in Peace.

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking the many (and I do mean many) members of my committee for helping me through what someone once called the first unofficial book of my academic career. I first thank Lisa Green who inspired me to start studying black speech. Her book, *African American English: A Linguistic Introduction*, which I used in the first class I designed and taught, is what started me on this journey. The chapter on African American English in the media encouraged me to look further into the uses of black speech by white characters. I also thank Sonja Lanehart who began to mentor me once Lisa moved to another state. Without her willingness to read rough drafts of conference papers and to travel in order to meet with me at restaurants in between Austin and San Antonio my progress on this project would have stagnated. Both of these women are examples of the type of scholar I aspire to be. I am grateful to both Lars Hinrichs and Patience Epps, who both were added to my committee later in the writing process, but ironically became my co-advisors. When Lars agreed to be an advisor, he brought with him the energy and sociolinguistic knowledge to help motivate me to completion. He also worked hard to get insight from scholars in other areas such as race and film theory by sending them my work and arranging meetings with us. By agreeing to be an advisor, Pattie became a lifesaver. Although she spent a brief time on my committee, her readiness to read my draft and provide comments was invaluable. I am appreciative of John Beavers and Megan Crowhurst for agreeing to be a part of my committee and asking critical questions and expressing theoretical concerns about my research. Lastly and most importantly, there is Elaine Chun. Any words that I use to describe the gratitude I feel toward Elaine do not truly capture it. Her expertise of

mocking practices, on language and race, and on social practices in general, is why I asked her to be a part of my committee. However, the hours she generously spent discussing the characters, theories, and organization of my dissertation went beyond the call of duty. I learned more from those conversations than many of the classes I have taken. A good portion of my dissertation comes as result of answering thought-provoking questions raised by her.

I also thank Mary Bucholtz who although not an official member of my committee has greatly influenced my dissertation as well as my professional life. Ian Hancock deserves a special mention for being a part of the early stages of my dissertation committee and for being a good friend. I further extend a sincere "thank you" to my two undergraduate researchers Jacob Sims and Virginia Williams who spent much time watching and transcribing a good amount of the films in my study. Thanks to Lynda de Jong Boudreault, my editor and friend, and to those in the department who have helped me in a myriad of ways. These include but are not limited to: Richard Meier, Leslie Crooks, Benjamin Rapstine, and Gina Pollard.

I want to show appreciation to my family and friends. I am grateful to Stacy Chen, Gabriela Garcia, and Emile Destruel-Johnson for coming together to form a brief but useful dissertation reading group, which helped me in the early stages of the writing process. I would also like to mention Sarah Wagner and Kate Shaw Points, the only other sociolinguists in the department and Jessica White-Sustaita, who was the only other student of black language. They were kind enough to attend practice talks and read abstracts and fellowship applications. Additionally, I would like to express the heartfelt gratitude I feel toward Montgomery Stewart whose calming effect always brought me down from the frenzy I would get into during this stressful process. I will also never forget the following people who made my time here in Austin more enjoyable: Justin

Mcintosh and Eric Campbell who made up the 5-2-5 crew, Adam Hammick, Shawn Chang, Cynthia Weber, Hyun-Jong Hahm, Ramon Guerrero, Udelle Robinson, Madlene Hamilton, Stephanie Villard, Theresa Cole, and Lynn Hou. Finally, I would like to give credit to my mom and dad for helping me realize that I can do anything I set my mind to and to my cousin Tanaya Gainey who sent a text message of encouragement almost everyday during the month before I submitted my dissertation to my committee. I would also like to express my appreciation to George Lopez whose support throughout my entire college experience is immeasurable.

White Bodies, Black Voices: The Linguistic Construction of Racialized Authenticity in US Film

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The University of Texas at Austin 2012

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By examining the range of stances that white characters in Hollywood films are represented as taking in relation to blackness, this dissertation considers the question of how language becomes ideologically linked to categories of race through linguistic representations. Through an analysis of 59 films (1979-2008) from multiple genres, this study focuses on the linguistic practices of the characters that contribute to larger semiotic practices performed by discernible social types. The first linguistic practice, *crossing*, plays on the stereotype of the inauthentic, white male, who tries to gain coolness through linguistic representations of African Americans. The second practice, *passing*, conjures images of blackface because in addition to using linguistic representations of African Americans, the passing characters darken their skin. By demonstrating complex links between language and social meanings such as ideologies about authenticity, identity and racial and gendered stereotypes, these films use linguistic features along with other visual and physical semiotic displays to both construct and comment on black and white authenticity.

Specifically, crossing was found to comment on disseminated images of the young, white male as lacking a particular type of masculinity and sexuality and overcompensating for them by imitating widely circulating images of the hypermasculine, hypersexual and hyperphysical black male. In addition, it commented on the tendency to read this linguistic practice as inauthentic. Therefore, the social meaning of the white linguistic representations of African Americans used when crossing was found to be related to authenticity or who had the right to use ethnically-marked linguistic features. On the other hand, passing was argued to communicate the ideologies that some whites may have of African Americans, particularly African American men. The linguistic resources utilized in these performances are not used to form identity, but for humor and to distance the character from being read as traditional minstrelsy. By highlighting some of the linguistic strategies that speakers in Hollywood use to (re)produce not only indexical links between linguistic forms and racialized stereotypes but also ideologies about racial authenticity, this dissertation provides an empirical study of some of the semiotic practices that involve the re-indexicalization of minority vernacular resources by members of the majority.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The white character who 'talks black[1]' has become a recognizable figure in Hollywood film. Typically such characters perform blackness by using linguistic and non-linguistic features that are associated with a subset of the black community, namely young African American males, and using (and sometimes reinterpreting) them in a consistent way that they create a recognizable archetype. This dissertation examines two of these archetypes. The first, referred here as the modern blackface character can be found in movies from 1976 to 2008. This character has updated the traditional blackface character by backgrounding the mocking of Blacks and foregrounding the mocking of the white character who tries to pass as Black. The second character, the wigger character, began appearing in film in the 1990's which coincided with white, young males who were supporting hip hop culture through language and fashion choices in real life. This character is portrayed as drawing from cultural resources that are read by others as Black. Because of this, these characters have to ratify themselves as authenticated participants of these resources. This dissertation concentrates on how language and embodied semiotics are used by both these archetypes in order to construct identity.

A core focus of my analysis of the constructed identity of these characters is the examination of multivocality or the potential for speakers to engage in cultural commentary through multiple layers of voice (Bakhtin 1986), which is contrary to the

[1] I capitalize black and white only when they function as a noun. In all other cases, I use lowercase (see Chapter 3)

traditional focus on the single voice of the speaker. In other words, there are multiple ways in which speakers can position themselves in relation to the styles they adopt ranging from mono-voiced styling to unidirectionally[2] double-voiced stylization or varidirectionally[3] double-voiced parody (Bakhtin 1986). Unlike real-life representations of whites performing blackness, film representations reflect multiple voices, including those of the screenwriter, the director, and the actor. Examining the ways in which these characters articulate these voices can provide insight into the kind of social commentary these layers of voices make possible (e.g., parodists commentary on the ridiculousness of wiggers). In this project, I examine blackface and 'blackvoice'—"that is, nonblack speakers' use of linguistic features indexical of blackness" (Bucholtz 2011b: 256)—with the intention of exploring the complex links between language, social meaning, and identity as well as the roles that language ideologies and authenticity play in Hollywood films.

1.1 THEORETICAL APPROACH

In recent years, there have been multiple studies in the field of sociolinguistics that have addressed the adoption of linguistic features by people who are not considered to be members of the speech community from which the linguistic features belong. This phenomenon has become known as language crossing (e.g. Hewitt 1986; Rampton 2005; Bucholtz 1997; Culter 1999). In this research, of particular interest has been the use of

[2] Unidirectionally voiced stylizations are voiced as belonging to the speaker.
[3] Varidirectionally voiced parodies are presented as not belonging to the speaker.

African American language (AAL) features by white, middle-class youth and how they use these features to construct identities. In these studies, crossing is considered a "disjunction between speaker and code that can not be readily accommodated as a normal part of ordinary social reality" (1995: 278). In other words, crossing is applied to those individuals who willfully choose linguistic features that are not the default for that individual within his or her local context (Fought 2006). Consequently, code-switching is usually not treated as crossing, even though the two share qualities (Fought 2006). Considering Rampton's definition, I would argue that the linguistic passing (Bucholtz 1995; Hall 1995)—or the use of a linguistic code of an ethnic group that a speaker does not belong to while trying to pass as a member of that ethnic group—discussed in the present study is also a form of crossing. A key difference between the two being that linguistic passing does not require that the use of the linguistic code be an active choice by the individual[4].

Continuing the discussion of crossing, a speaker of ethnicity A raised in a community of ethnicity B and uses the linguistic variety of ethnicity B in his or her everyday language would not be considered a crosser. This is because it is assumed that the speaker has 'naturally' acquired the features of that variety (Fought 2006). Additionally, speakers of minority language varieties who use features of the majority language variety in their local area are also not considered to be participating in language crossing. Instead, use of these features are considered a form of linguistic assimilation because these features are often not believed to be associated with any particular ethnic

[4] See Chapters 2 and 4 for further distinctions between linguistic crossing and passing.

group and are argued to be available to all speakers (Vermeij 2004). Although most research has looked at language crossing in everyday interactional contexts, crossing is also common in popular film contexts when white actors use linguistic features indexical of blackness.

White linguistic representations of African Americans draw from various resources, including Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL; Alim 2006) as well as phonological and grammatical features from AAL and other non-standard Englishes. At one level, the linguistic practices in these films may operate as mock speech (Hill 1999; Ronkin & Karn 1999; Mesthrie 2002; Chun 2004; Meek 2006) because the characters use only the most saliently stereotypical representations of these varieties and by doing so reinforce ideologies about black people and their speech patterns (Lopez 2009; Bucholtz 2011b; Bucholtz and Lopez 2011). Specifically, these linguistic performances are often rooted in racial as well as gendered stereotypes since the linguistic elements used are characterized as black male speech (Lopez 2009; Bucholtz & Lopez 2011).

In contrast to mock speech where the character voices the language as his own, characters who use these linguistic features also engage in "strategic inauthenticity" (Clarke & Hiscock 2009) or de-authentication (Coupland 2001) by making it clear that the perspective they are endorsing is not their own or one that relates to authenticity at all (Coupland 2001). In these instances, ideologies about race, class, and gender can still be reinforced. Finally, there are also those characters whose linguistic representations of African Americans can be considered ratified or "authenticated" because it presents natural uses of a dialect influenced by black speech (Sweetland 2002). At all levels of

representations there is the possibility of reading the performance as racially inauthentic because each of the characters utilize similar semiotic resources (e.g. linguistic features, clothing, etc.). By exploring the different ways in which white characters linguistically represent race and gender, I hope to shed light on the nuances of how these linguistic features are used to both construct authenticity and inauthenticity. Furthermore, by demonstrating that these linguistic practices are more complicated than just the reinforcement of essentialized boundaries, I hope to move us beyond the arguments that insist that the only way that white kids fit into the multicultural space of hip-hop is through appropriating black youth culture and argue instead that some representations suggest that they have created their own subculture within hip-hop (Kitwana 2006). That is to say, part of the constructed identity includes performing blackness in such a way that it actually articulates whiteness (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011).

The primary questions I address in this dissertation are: (1) *Which features are characteristic of the performances of white linguistic representations of African Americans?* (2) *What ideologies about language, race, and gender are circulated by these performances?* and (3) *How are particular performances constructed as authentic or inauthentic?* In order to answer these questions, I describe the features used by the characters. Although drawn on in a reductive way, linguistic features at the lexical, morphosyntactic, phonological, and prosodic levels are present in the white representations of African Americans. These include, but are not limited to, slang terms such as *yo* and *dog*, the use of habitual *be*, the vocalization of [r], and falsetto phonation. In focusing on some of the most salient features associated with black speech, the

characters ignore other less stereotypical ones. Describing the features allows me to see if the characters are using the same features in similar ways to construct social meaning[5]. Even though some characters can be considered parodies of real-life Whites whose linguistic practices are read as black, the fact that the characters are non-African American and non-working class is especially sensitive considering the fact that the performances can be contextualized as a recent form of parody in a long history of Whites making fun of Blacks in minstrel shows.

Drawing upon intersecting concepts of performativity (Butler 1988) and authentication (Bucholtz 2003) this study argues that the identities performed by the characters are constructed through a repetition of stylized acts in order to authenticate themselves as ingroup users of minority vernacular resources or to denaturalize themselves in a way that emphasizes the distance between the ethnically-marked features they are using and their 'natural' way of speaking and behaving (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). These practices includes the range of positions that white men in Hollywood are linguistically represented as taking in relation to blackness, including imitating, emulating, passing and failing to pass as ratified users of ethnically-marked speech. In addressing these issues, I consider authenticity not to be based on any objective 'realness', but on the construction of 'realness'. I argue that authenticity is a subjectively agreed upon status that does not exist until it emerges from specific social interactions that create it (Bucholtz 2003). In other words, I do not presume that the features used by

[5] See Chapter 6 for the complete discussion of the linguistic features used in white representations of African Americans.

these characters 'belong' to a particular set spoken by a racial group or that these characters naturally 'belong' to social groups. Rather, in the cases I examine, I demonstrate that linguistic 'belonging/authenticity' is a sociocultural outcome of discourse. Additionally, by emphasizing the socially constructed nature of identity and language, I show that the social meanings of language (e.g., as racially authentic or inauthentic) are collaboratively constructed between participants rather than based in speaker identity or intention (Bucholtz & Hall 2005).

The styling practices of linguistic performance are also stylizations, or the linguistic projection of self not totally your own (Coupland 2001). White linguistic representations of African Americans are a part of a chain of stylistic indexical orders (Silverstein 2003) that began when Whites began to parody Blacks in minstrel shows. The linguistic performances in these films in some ways represent those in real life thereby combining the phenomena of language crossing and linguistic performance by demonstrating how crossing is represented in mediated performances of vernacular dialects. By looking at mediated performances of vernacular dialects, I use film as data and apply it to the lens of current sociolinguistic theory. I treat film as a cultural artifact that works on multiple semiotic channels, one of them being language, because it contains representations of the linguistic practices that I am interested in studying. I argue that this entitles me to treat film the way I would treat naturalistic data. Film is an ideal source of data for a study of linguistic practices in social context. In examining these films the focus is on the characters. The study of media representations of

particular kinds of whiteness provides insight into ideologies we might have of white representations of blackness and whether these ideologies are shaped by media.

1.2 Overview of Dissertation

I begin with two chapters that provide the theoretical and methodological background of my study by demonstrating where my paper fits in with previous sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropology studies (Chapter 2) and describing how I chose the films used in this study (Chapter 3). Chapter 3 also lists which films were chosen, provides a description of the characters in the films, and discusses how I transcribed the dialogue within the films. Chapters 4 and 5 introduce the character types and explore the strategies used by them in order to authenticate themselves. The focal point of Chapter 4 is a discussion of linguistic passing along with a juxtaposition of the modern blackface character and the traditional blackface character. By examining the metapragmatic discussions provided within the dialogue of two of the films in my dataset, the first half of Chapter 5 describes the ideologies of authenticity and identity held by the wigger characters in this study. The second half of Chapter 5 focuses on the performances of these characters and considers how they can be interpreted as either accommodating or mocking. My analysis of these characters ends in Chapter 6 with a description of the linguistic features utilized in creating these identities. Chapter 7 attempts to answer the questions asked in the current chapter and provides directions for future research.

Chapter 2: A Review of Authenticity, Performance and Style

Sociolinguistic research has illustrated that linguistic representations of a language or dialect are also social representations of its speakers. This dissertation looks at linguistic representations in film; specifically, how white linguistic practices are used to construct racialized authenticity. In observing these portrayals, I am not examining linguistic features as they are used by actual speakers. Instead I am attempting to find out what these film representations can tell us about how a specific type of authenticity is constructed. Yet if I am not looking at naturalistic data but looking at Hollywood representations, *what role can authenticity play*? By considering the sociolinguistic research that guides my current study, I aim to answer this question. After discussing the way in which *style* is considered in the present study, I summarize apposite studies of *performativity and performance* that inform my research. I also outline the *acts of identity* that I contend lead to the different identities constructed by the characters found in my data. Following, I describe the role of *authenticity* in this dissertation. At the end of this chapter, I evaluate the usefulness of media as a site for understanding certain aspects of language and society.

2.1 STYLE

Style has had fundamentally different meanings in the history of sociolinguistics and other related fields. In this section, I discuss the "three waves" (Eckert 2009) of the study of style that guide my study. Between the different waves, there has been a shift

from a more cognitive to a more identity-based view. During the first wave, style was rooted in linguistic form; the second and third waves root style in linguistic function. The first wave also believed that style shifts depended on how much attention was paid to speech while the second and third waves argue that style shifts are an outcome of a wide range of contextual factors. Another aspect that has also changed between the first wave and the latter two is that the later ones treat style as involving multiple codes as opposed to a monolingual phenomenon. No wave replaces the previous and the studies within them will not necessarily be presented as if they occurred in a linear fashion.

2.1.1 First Wave

The first wave of variationist sociolinguistics research (e.g. Labov 1966; Wolfram 1969; Trudgill 1972) relied on large-scale, survey-based, community studies. The approach claimed a unidimensional link between social constructs and language (Bucholtz 2009). Thus, language was seen as a reflection of social class. Variables functioned as "direct markers of social categories and were associated with class-based prestige or stigma" (M. Bucholtz, personal communication, July 14, 2009). Style was believed to vary depending on the attention a speaker paid to speech. That is, it was argued that as speakers became more conscious of their own ways of speaking certain linguistic features varied.

For example, William Labov (1966; 1972), who was concerned about a possible observer's paradox, was interested in obtaining data that represented 'natural' speech rather than speech that varied due to the presence of an onlooker. Therefore, in creating

his method of eliciting style-shifts, he developed a sociolinguistic interview design that either promoted or downplayed the self-monitoring of speech. The interview simulated a range of social contexts within a single interaction and yielded speech along a casual/careful continuum. Specifically, he had speakers from New York tell narratives and read word lists. His analysis was quantitative in that it used a single variant, postvocalic [r]. He found that speakers were more likely to use postvocalic [r] while reading word lists than when they were narrating a story with emotional or personal content. From this, he operationalized style as an effect of attention paid to speech. His study was instrumental in revealing that there was a connection between stylistic and social class variation (Schilling-Estes 2002).

Multiple scholars have looked critically at the Attention to Speech approach and have challenged it. These include, but are not limited to: the difficulty of distinguishing between formal and casual speech (Wolfram 1969: 58-59 cited in Schilling Estes 2002), viewing speakers as passive instead of agentive (Schilling-Estes 2002), and perceiving the notion of vernacular unidimensionally (Coupland 2001). An alternative to Labov's approach to style that is argued to overcome some of its shortcomings (Schilling Estes 2002; Coupland 2007) is Allan Bell's Audience Design model (1984).

Bell's (1984) model proposed that style shifting is a response to the audience and not attention to speech. He argues that "variation on the style dimension within the speech of a single speaker derives from and echoes the variation which exists between speakers on the 'social' dimension" (Bell 2001: 151). Stated differently, stylistic or intraspeaker variation is derivative of social or interspeaker variation. The main claims

of the audience design model is that style shifts involve both "responsive" shifts in relation to one's audience (audience design) and "initiative" shifts that orient to a nonpresent reference group (referee design). The initiative aspect of style includes phenomena such as crossing. Secondary factors that contribute to style include overhearers, topic and setting.

The Audience Design model contrasts with the Attention to Speech model in that it views style as a social, relational, and dialogical phenomenon as opposed to an individual, psychological one. Instead of a key context that relies on speech genre such as interviews and word lists, the central context for style in the Audience Design model is the audience. Furthermore, in lieu of a speaker identity that is fixed, Bell's model suggests that speaker identity is constructed and depends on the situation. In this way, his view on style sets the stage for third-wave views on style.

Despite the fact that the Audience Design model has been one of the most well received and most sustained alternatives to the Attention to Speech approach (Schilling-Estes 2002; Coupland 2007), it too has limitations. One criticism is that the model still relies on a passive rather than an active dimension of stylistic variation (Schilling-Estes 2002). Another criticism of audience design is that it only allows for the idea that "style derives its meaning from the association of linguistic features with particular social groups" (Bell 2001: 142). While this is indeed true, this is a unidimensional view of style. It assumes that language is only a reflection of social structures. It does not allow for a bidirectional approach where language is also seen as maintaining social structures or creating social views. In all fairness, Bell (2001) has reformulated his model to

address some of these concerns and in doing so has brought it closer to Speech Accommodation Theory (Giles and Powesland 1975) that gives speakers more agency.

2.1.2 Second Wave

The second wave was similar to the first in that it was seen as marking social categories (Eckert 2009). However, unlike the first wave, it focused on small-scale ethnographic community studies (e.g. Eckert 2000; Gal 1979; Labov 1963; Milroy 1980). The social classifications that were of concern for researchers that were a part of this wave were defined locally but linked to "macro-sociological" (Eckert 2009) categories. The variables in these studies were considered indexes of local social groups and the definitions of style were based on associations with salient categories or identities.

Penelope Eckert's (2000) study of *jocks* and *burnouts* is an example of a second wave approach to the study of style variation. The jocks had a middle-class socioeconomic status and built academic networks aimed at getting them into college. On the other hand, the burnouts were working class and rejected collegiate and authority based networks in favor of local and vocational activities. The two groups also had different practices that were displayed in their clothing styles (pastel colors and preppy styles for the jocks in comparison to the dark colors and rock concert tee-shirts, and jean jackets of the burnouts), makeup and hairstyle choices (candy-colored makeup and feathered hair for the jock girls as opposed to dark eye shadow and liner with long straight hair for the burnout girls). Eckert's results demonstrated that there was a relation between the burnouts visual representations of toughness and their uses of urban variants

of the late stages of the Northern Cities shift. This included the backing of /e/ and the raising of the nucleus /ay/. The burnouts led the jocks in their uses of these changes. The avoidance of these features by the jocks was interpreted by Eckert as signaling their ties to an anti-urban orientation and the adoption of these features by the burnouts as signaling their ties to an urban orientation.

2.1.3 Third Wave

The third wave differs from the first two in that it focuses on communication in practice (e.g. Bell 1984, 2001; Zhang 2005; Campbell-Kibler 2007) instead of structure without agency (Eckert 2009). The fundamental principle of the third wave is that "variation constitutes an indexical system that embeds ideology in language, and that enables the form of speech itself to act upon society" (Eckert 2009: 21). This wave focused on the importance of the negotiation of self and broadened the field to not only include linguistic features but different kinds of visual and auditory semiotic resources including clothing, activities and musical preference. Therefore, language does not have a "special status" in this wave, but becomes just one of the social practices used to create meaning and identity (Bucholtz 1999b).

One study that demonstrates the communication in practice model introduced by the third wave of studies is Bucholtz's (1998) study of the 'nerd' identity formed by high school females. Specifically, she described how through linguistic and other social practices, the "nerd girls" constructed "alternative femininities and masculinities that critiqued normative gender identities" (128). For example, the students rejected certain

phonetic features such as the fronting of (uw) and (ow) in order to create a distance between them and students who were considered cool or trendy. They also adopted a slower rate of speech which produced an effect of careful enunciation. These two taken together constructed them as intelligent. Furthermore, by subverting social expectations in regards to sex, by not wearing revealing or tight clothing, these students challenged ideologies of gender and sexuality. Bucholtz's study confirms the fact that resources other than language need to be considered when defining stylistic meaning.

2.2 FROM IDENTITY TO PRACTICES OF IDENTIFICATION

As the discussion above suggests, the study of style in sociolinguistics has moved toward the study of identity. Specifically it has shifted from assigning meaning by mapping linguistic forms onto social categories to drawing on concepts of indexicality (Ochs 1992; Silverstein 2003). As a result, how meanings emerge complexly in specific moments are prioritized over broader patterns of social meanings. This section discusses some of the studies that contribute to this body of scholarship.

2.2.1 Performativity and Acts of Identity

Although performativity (Butler 1988; 1990) and performance (Bauman & Briggs 1990) are related theories, this study distinguishes between the two, noting that performativity is interested in the issue of repetitiveness and irreducibleness, while performance combines theories of language, identity, and text with acts of performance. Expanding upon Austin's (1975) notion of performativity, Butler uncovers the fallacies

present in hegemonic ideas of identity. Her description of identity portrays it as actively constructed through culturally scripted performances. She specifically looks at performances of gender identity and argues that gender is instituted through stylization of the body and hence must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. The concept of performativity allows for the idea that gender like other social identities is adaptable and can change depending on the social context. "Performative identities are not false; they are not the function of the kind of artifice or masking that implies a hidden 'real' self; rather they challenge the coherence of that presumed real" (Blocker 1999: 25).

2. 2.1.2 Acts of Identity

A framework that is appealing to a constructionist approach to identity is Le Page and Tabouret-Keller's (1985) 'acts of identity' framework. These authors treat linguistic behavior as acts "in which people reveal both their personal identity and their search for social roles" (14). If their behavior is accepted or reinforced, then it may become a standard practice leading to a new linguistic system. They acknowledge an overlap between their theoretical approach and that of Giles and Powesland's (1975) speech accommodation theory (discussed more in Chapter 3). The main difference between the two is that Le Page and Tabouret-Keller are interested in longer shifts in community speech norms, while Giles and Powesland have been mainly interested in the consequences of interpersonal and intergroup accommodation. Within the acts of identity

framework, speakers are believed to model their language on that of groups with which they wish to be identified. However, there are constraints in that the speaker must:

(1) be able to identify the groups
(2) have adequate access to the groups and ability to analyze their behavioral patterns
(3) have a strong motivation to join the groups, and receive feedback from the groups that either reinforces or reverses the motivation
(4) have the ability to modify his (sic) behavior (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985: 181-182).

As the speakers continue to use specific features of the language that they are modeling, they settle on a particular, sometimes stereotypical set of features that may become recognizable as a variety.

The acts of identity that led to white linguistic representations of African Americans can be argued to have started with African American English (AAE), an ethnically marked dialect that is the result of the experience of United States slave descendants. AAE "served to bind the enslaved together, melding diverse African ethnic groups into one community" (Smitherman 2006: 3). It diverges linguistically from General American English (GAE) in its lexicon, phonology and grammar. This act of identity is constrained by (1), (2), and (4) above. African Americans needed to be aware of white Americans and their linguistic behaviors because many of the lexical and semantic features of AAE were used in the exact opposite manner in which it was used by GAE. This is similar to the ideology behind Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL), which is considered to be a subset variety of AAE.

The emergence of a hip hop identity in America is discussed by many scholars (e.g. Rose 1994; Smitherman 1997; Morgan 2001; Perry 2004; Alim 2006). This identity formed when black youth came together to speak against "the political ideology of the Reagan-Bush administration era and its promotion of the social and civic abandonment of urban schools and communities in the U.S." (Morgan 2001: 187). The linguistic outcome of this identity has been referred to as Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL), a resistant dialect used by urban youth who affiliate with hip hop culture (Smitherman 1997; Morgan 2001; Alim 2006). According to Morgan 2001, the basic ideology of HHNL can be described as "regularize[ing] GAE features, highlight[ing] AAE and working class regional features, and cast[ing] lexical havoc" (194). Although this variety is spoken mostly by black youth, through hip hop music, videos, and movies its linguistic features have become available for other youth groups to use as a resource to construct identity.

The white American youth who participate in hip hop through rapping, Djing, breakdancing, graffiti or through just buying the hip hop products have constructed another act of identity–the wigger identity. Along with this identity is the creation of a white American linguistic style that is influenced by the linguistic features of the African American speech community. This linguistic style (discussed in the following) has been described by others and has been referred to as cross-racial African American Vernacular English or CRAAVE (Bucholtz 1997, 1999) as well as Hip Hop Speech Style (HHSS) (Cutler 2002). This act of identity is constrained by the fact that the individual must have both adequate access to the groups and ability to analyze their behavioral patterns. White

American youth are able to do this by listening to rap music, watching rap videos, and hip hop movies. Now that the embracing of hip hop culture and language by white American youth has been represented in film, a cultural type has been created. This cultural type uses white linguistic *representations* of African Americans. How similar this linguistic style is to the linguistic style of CRAAVE or HHSS is one of the questions this paper seeks to explore.

2.2.2 Performance

Like Butler (1990), Bauman and Briggs (1990) also take a socially constructed, agent-centered approach to performance. However, of importance to their analysis of performance is contextualization. They place an emphasis on texts and the idea that they can move across contexts, suggesting an "active process of negotiation in which participants reflexively examine the discourse as it is emerging, embedding assessments of its structure and significance in the speech itself" (69). Specifically, they focus on the processes of *entextualization*, *decontextualization* and *recontextualization*. Entextualization is the practice "of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit—a text—that can be lifted out of its interactional setting" (73). In other words, it allows discourse to be removed from its original context and reflected upon in metalinguistic and metapragmatic situations. This is something for which performance is suited. Once a text is displaced, it becomes decontextualized and can be recontextualized or refocused in another social context. Therefore, "to decontextualize and recontextualize a text is thus an act of control" (76) implying that it can be used to

construct identities. In the present study, I consider how these processes can be used to explain how a set of words originated in African American communities—texts—can be read differently depending on the context.

An area where Butler's (1988; 1990) and Bauman and Briggs (1990) approaches come together is in the performance of 'drag'. The tradition of drag is an example of normative gendered behavior in that it performatively authorizes gender as 'natural' by exposing it as a social construct (M. Bucholtz, personal communication, August 6, 2009). However, it is also "an aesthetically marked and heightened mode of communication, framed in such a special way and put on display for an audience" (Bauman 1992: 41). The performer has a responsibility to provide a virtuosic display of communicative competence and the audience has the right to evaluate the performance. In this way, drag is an exception because "most performative acts are not performances in Bauman's sense" (M. Bucholtz, personal communication, August 6, 2009).

2.2.3 Identity in interaction

Attention to interaction is considered to be critical to the comprehension of style. Three concepts used to analyze social orientation in interaction include: (1) footing (Goffman 1981) (2) positioning (Harré & van Langenhove's 1999) and (3) stance (Du Bois 2007; Jaffe 2009). Since both footing and positioning are discussed elsewhere in this dissertation (Chapters 3 and 6 respectively), I will focus the rest of this section on a discussion of stance.

Stance is traditionally defined in linguistics as the "lexicogrammatical marking of affective or epistemic subjectivity" (M. Bucholtz, personal communication, July 28, 2009). A socio-interactional definition of stance is:

> a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means (language, gesture, and other symbolic forms), through which social actors simultaneously evaluate objects, position subjects (themselves and others), and align with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of value in the sociocultural field (Du Bois 2007: 169).

According to Du Bois (2007), defining features of stance include three entities and three actions. The entities include a first and second subject and a stance object while the actions include evaluation, positioning, and alignment. Together, they create a triangle that demonstrates relationships between the entities and the acts through stance as well as link them dialogically. Linguistic resources may directly index a particular stance or social action and when a speaker or group of speakers repeatedly take the same stance, that stance may come to indirectly index a style, personae, or social identity associated with the group (Ochs 1992). At times, ideology through the semiotic process of erasure (Irvine & Gal 1995; Irvine & Gal 200; Irvine 2001) can erase the role of stance resulting in a particular resource becoming directly indexical of a particular social group.

Studies that demonstrate how linguistic forms may become conventionally tied to specific stances and styles include Kiesling (2004), whose discussion of the use of the word *dude* indicates that it has a cool or unconcerned stance that is also tied to youthful masculinity. Mendoza-Denton's (2008) description of young Latina gang girls includes the fact that the raising of /ɪ/ was indexical of being tough and Latina while Podesva

(2007) examination of the use of falsetto suggests that it is used to index a diva persona and possibly a gay identity. Together, these studies demonstrate that stances are resources for constructing enduring forms of identity.

2.3 AUTHENTICITY

Linguistic authenticity has been examined in two different ways by sociolinguistic and anthropological researchers. There are those who treat it as something that is fixed or stable and those who treat it as a temporal and negotiated construction (Bucholtz 2003; Coupland 2003; 2010; Eckert 2003). Originally, the debate was between ideas of 'establishment' and 'vernacular' (Coupland 2003) authenticity where establishment authenticities were believed to be standard forms of language, and vernacular authenticities described how people in the community naturally spoke. A speaker was understood to have vernacular authenticity if he or she had not strayed from his or her community and therefore spoke only the language of said community. In current concepts of the authentic speaker, performance is a site of construction and "performance implies control and deployment of communicative resources rather than just 'behavior in context' " (Coupland 2003: 426). The concept of authenticity that informs the current study is 'authenticity in performance' (Coupland 2003) which treats authenticity as a process and not a state, and therefore recognizes that people have to work towards authenticating themselves (Coupland 2003; Bucholtz 2003).

Variationist sociolinguistics has tended to assume that authentic speech is in the vernacular or the first-learned variety of an individual or group (Bucholtz 2003;

Coupland 2003; 2009). This is not the goal of performance sociolinguistics. Instead, it deals with the study of language that is deliberately styled. Everything in performance sociolinguistics is "intuitive…and this raises questions about authenticity" (Bell & Gibson 2011: 564). The idea of authenticity that is central to this dissertation is one where authenticity needs to be both merited and ascribed (usually by those in the community). Ideas of authentic blackness have been consistently contested, especially by Blacks. In order to see this historically, one only has to look back at discourses of 'house niggers' vs. 'field niggers', Booker T. Washington's push for vocational skills over W.E.B. Dubois's 'talented tenth'; Malcolm X's call for blacks to fight against the white establishment 'by any means necessary' vs. Martin Luther King's call for 'turning the other cheek'; etc. (Johnson 2003). What these discourses tell us is that the definition of blackness changes depending on who defines it. Because of this we know that black identity is socially constructed and therefore performed.

The fact that what constitutes authentic blackness can change makes studying the performance of black identity by whites interesting and has been commented on by several scholars (Nowatzki 2007; Strausbaugh 2006; Kitwana 2006; Johnson 2003; Boyd 2002; Green 2002). These studies have looked at popular representations of these performances and have suggested that when whites perform blackness, they do so to enhance their white identity usually without concern for authenticity. Because of this, their performance becomes a type of figurative blackface where they "don't actually blacken their faces, but their dress and demeanor can be called a kind of… blackface—blackface as a lifestyle" (Strausbaugh 2006: 314).

2.3.1 Passing and Crossing

Passing and crossing are discussed as the uses of language by outgroup members and are defined by the performance of language that is presumed to be inauthentic. The present study treats passing as a kind of crossing; however, the two can be distinguished. To start with, unlike cases of passing, individuals who cross are usually not trying to pass as members of the ethnic group into which they are crossing. Consequently, crossing can be done by anyone. Although validation is needed to be considered an authenticated speaker of the linguistic code, a person can cross without it being recognized as legitimated language use by the speech community he or she crosses into (Fought 2006). In fact, most of the characters discussed in the current data set are criticized for doing so, but their language use is still considered crossing. Per contra, since passing requires that a person is recognized (through deception) as a member of the group he or she is passing into (Bucholtz 1995), validation is required by others (Fought 2006). Linguistic studies of passing include Bucholtz's (1995) study of mixed-race women in the US and Hall's (1995) study of women in the "fantasy line" industry.

Both studies illustrate the complexities of passing. For example, Hall's research revealed that European-American women and African-American women were better at performing the ethnic identity of the opposite group because callers relied on stereotypical performances of black and white ethnicity rather than the variation that occurs as part of the linguistic identity of both groups. Bucholtz's study illustrated that women who are already multiracial did not always choose to affiliate with ethnicities that were a part of their background, nor did they always choose to pass into whiteness. As

an example, Buchotz's comments on a Japanese-American and European-American woman who performed a Latina identity. Bucholtz's study underlines the fact that ethnic and gender identities are constructed.

Similarly to passing, crossing is also a practice that demonstrates the constructed nature of identity. Hewitt's (1986) study is the first in depth examination of the topic. He examines Creole use by white adolescents in South London. Some of the factors he looks at include: when a speaker crosses (i.e. among white or black peers), how often they cross, and how native speakers react to the use of Creole by the non-community members. According to him, Creole is used for teasing and in order to align speakers with the black community. It also has the function of undermining teachers in a classroom setting. He indicates that the participants in his study stopped crossing among around the age of 16, suggesting that crossing is a youth oriented phenomena.

Although Hewitt (1986) was the first to address the topic, Rampton (1995) is the one to first coin the term 'crossing' as it refers to language. His study takes place in a multiethnic town in the South Midlands of England. It extends Hewitt's in that it looks at more linguistic varieties and ethnic communities. The varieties available for crossing for his participants include Creole, stylized Asian English, and Punjabi and he considers examples of crossing for each. He focuses on crossing by the speakers of Anglo ethnicity but also examines the phenomenon by speakers of Asian and Afro-Caribbean origin. What he finds important is interactional contexts, which is whether the crossing speakers are interacting with their peers, adults, or in less common settings such as a musical performance. He finds that crossing in this study was used to challenge expectations

about ethnicity, resist authority figures and to index identities other than ethnic ones. Unlike Hewitt's study, which only illustrated crossing from the dominant group into the minority group, Rampton provides examples of members of two of the minority groups (black and Asian) crossing into the other's variety.

Recent studies have looked at crossing in America. For example, Bucholtz (1999) examines the use of African American Vernacular English by middle class European American males and contends that the image of blackness that the white male focused upon in her study held is rooted in the ideology that blackness is linked to power and violence as well to African American Vernacular English and masculinity. In another study, Chun (2001) similar to Rampton's research provides an example of a minority group (in this case Korean American) crossing into another minority group's variety. She argues that the speaker in her study used AAVE in a way that attached blackness to a hyper(hetero)sexuality. Culter's (2003) research looks at six white speakers who used AAE in order to prove that they are authentic members of Hip Hop culture. By doing so, these speakers link AAE and Hip Hop to blackness.

These studies have illustrated that although it can be, language crossing is not necessarily making fun of the native speakers of the borrowed linguistic variety. It can have beneficial functions such as mitigating interactional tensions or aligning oneself with the ingroup members of the dialect. However, stylized instances (Bakhtin 1981, 1984; Coupland 2001) of language crossing can come across as "being studiedly 'artificial' or 'putting on a voice' " (Coupland 2001: 346). In these cases, they can perpetuate harmful stereotypes about the group whose language has been appropriated as

well as create social differences.

2.3.2 Stylization

According to Bakhtin (1981), "stylization differs from style proper precisely by virtue of its requiring a specific linguistic consciousness…under whose influence a style becomes a stylization, against whose background it acquires new meaning and significance" (362). Coupland's (2001) interpretation of stylization is "the knowing and strategic inauthenticity in performance, where performers lead audiences to understand that a representation may or may not be as it purports to be, and in a sense invite audiences to make what they wish of it" (2009: 291). Because mediated voice is stylized voice, white linguistic representations of blackness are an example of stylization in both Coupland and Bakhtinian definitions. Stylization in Bakhtinian (1981, 1986) terms suggests that some utterances are "double-voiced" or belong to more than one person. The speaker of a "double-voiced" word or utterance appropriates it for the purpose of inserting new meaning into it, while also preserving its original meaning, which makes this a process similar to the processes described by Bauman and Briggs (1990) above. Styles and quotations that belong to multiple people can be "extextualized" and then adopted or "decontextualized" and used for different purposes in another context or "recontextualized". The hearer of "double-voiced" utterances is expected to interpret both meanings. As suggested by the multiple terms (i.e. double-voiced, multi-voiced, re-voiced) utilized in Bakhtin's metaphor, voice is dialogic in nature. Although Bakhtin argues that language does not fully belong to one person, the dialogic aspect represents a

speaker's negotiation regarding what words are appropriate to make one's own. Performed discourse in films does not belong to one person because the participant frameworks (Goffman 1981) include the screenwriter, director, producer and actors. Through film, they are able to consciously mediate social process giving it meaning by linking people together through speech.

2.4 MEDIA PERFORMANCES AS A SITE FOR DISCUSSIONS OF SOCIAL PRACTICE

Having presented an overview of the literature that informs my approach, I turn to a discussion of the use of the media to account for social processes. For a long time in sociolinguistics, media was disregarded because it was believed that media such as television, radio and film did not influence linguistic change (Trudgill 1986; Labov 2001). However, recently, there has been some effort in changing this perception (Stuart-Smith 2006) to one that at least recognizes that the media has "changed the terms of our engagement with language and social semiosis…and with dialect and vernaculars" (Coupland 2009: 296). Sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists have begun to realize that media practices can do more than just provide information or entertainment, but that they can also do ideological work (King 2009).

Media performances provide multiple modalities to incorporate in an analysis. In the case of film, it adds a visual modality that helps to demonstrate that performance is more than language. These include the way the characters look, their surroundings, and their mannerisms. The physical aspects of the performances in this study are considered when determining authenticity. The authentic speaker not only needs to be read as

linguistically authentic but also behaviorally. This can only be ascertained through a visual component of performance. Therefore, representations of language and culture can be both validated and undermined through media performances (Coupland 2009).

Media performances of language crossing can be considered instances of 'performativity' in Butler's (1988) sense and performance in Bauman's sense because they involve both stylization and performance for an audience (although the audience is not present during the performance). There are very few studies that have looked at media performances of language crossing. Those that have looked at media performances of minority languages include studies that have focused on the inaccurate portrayal of Asian and Native American varieties by (Lee 2007; Meek 2006). Recently, Bucholtz (2011a) and Bucholtz & Lopez (2011) analyzed the performances of white actors who adopted a black voice. Others have examined the voicing of characters in comedy performances. These include the voicing of white characters by Blacks (Rahman 2004), the voicing of Asian characters by Asian Americans (Chun 2004), and the voicing of Indian characters (Mesthrie 2002).

Many of the studies above discuss different ways that appropriating from racialized others is used to elevate "Whiteness" while lowering others. Thus, much of this work fits into a particular form of language crossing that began with the study of Spanish forms used by English-speaking monolinguals in the U.S. This type of crossing referred to as *Mock Spanish* (Hill 1995; 1999; 2005; 2008) is argued to covertly reproduce pernicious stereotypes of Latinos that characterize them as comical and lazy and overtly characterize the speaker as cosmopolitan. In her discussion of the use of

Mock Spanish in films such as *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991) and *Encino Man* (1992), Hill discusses how Mock Spanish expressions can give a humorous or negative meaning through semantic derogation and euphemisms. For example, the use of *Adios* by one of the main characters (John Connor) is argued to directly index "humor, a streetwise acquaintance with Spanish, a sense of Southwestern regional identity, and for the *Terminator 2* screenwriters, a representation of what they take to be appropriate speech for a white street kid from Los Angeles" (Hill 1995: para 17). Additionally, *adios* is intended as an insult because John Connor says it while destroying an evil artifact that belongs to the bad Terminator. Examples such as this, demonstrate that mediation is "a pervasive characteristic of meaning making, and because of this we need to understand the semiotic processes that constitute it" (Coupland 2009: 297). Therefore, investigating how language is used in public spaces such as film may tell us something about what we think and say about ourselves as well as others.

Chapter 3: Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

3.1 Theoretical Framework

This dissertation draws on three frameworks. The first is a socioculturally informed linguistic approach (Bucholtz 2003; Bucholtz & Hall 2005; 2008), which argues that the concept of identity is constructive, shared, reciprocal, temporal and "produced in linguistic interaction" (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 585). This type of approach is in contrast to those that presume that 'real' identities and language preexist and do not emerge through social and linguistic interaction. Through a method of discourse analysis (see next section) I examine identity based on the principles that (1) "identity is a product rather than the source of linguistic and other semiotic practices" (2) identities include "macro-level demographic categories, temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles," (3) "identities may be linguistically indexed through labels, implicatures, stances, styles, or linguistic structures and systems," (4) "identities are relationally constructed," and (5) identity "may be in part intentional," "in part habitual," "in part an outcome of interactional negotiation," "in part a construct of others' perceptions and representations," and "in part an outcome of larger ideological processes and structures" (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 585). Each of these principles will be discussed throughout my dissertation.

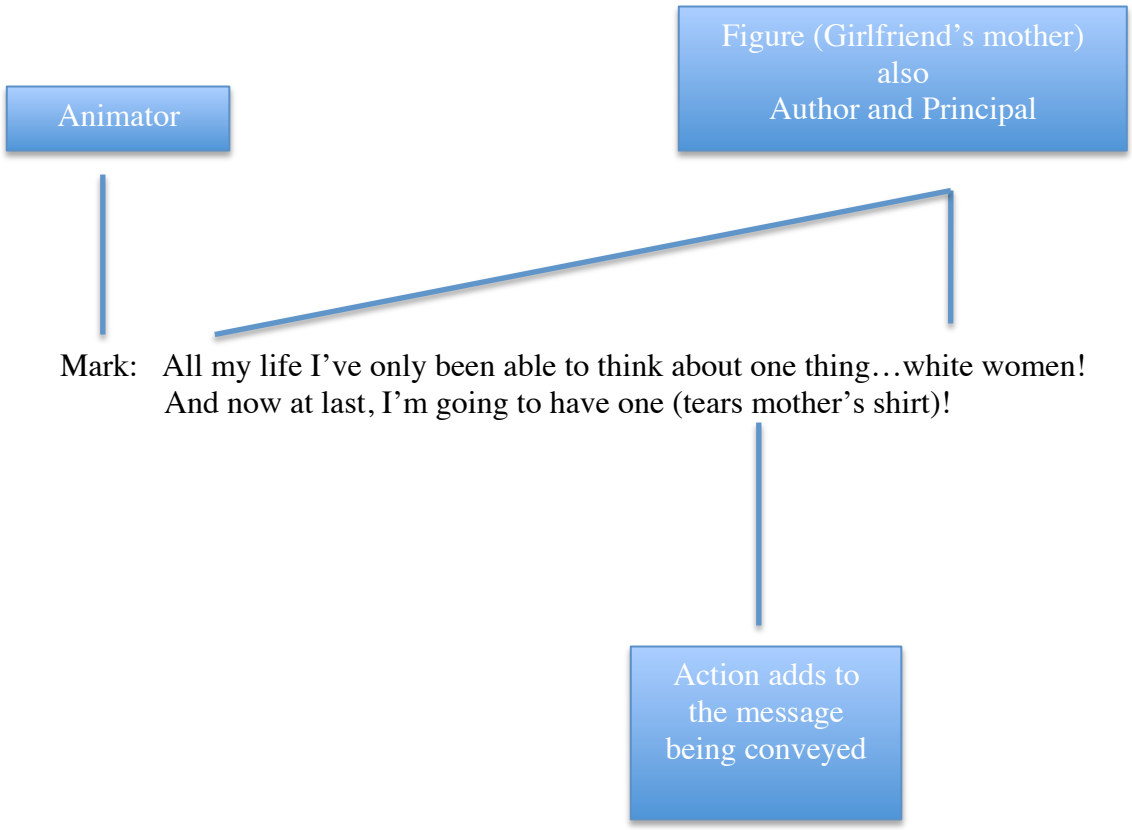
One particular goal of this study is to determine why some performances are considered to be successful (i.e. the character achieves some level of coolness or is read as authentic by the other characters) while others are unsuccessful (i.e. the characters are

considered inauthentic and uncool). In some of the films, the characters use of racialized language can be considered an instance of convergence (speech becomes more like those of interlocutors) in that they are using a dialect that is similar to other characters they interact with in the film. For example, the character Will in the movie *Black and White* uses racialized language throughout the film but always in the presence of his black friends. On the other hand, there are plenty of instances in which the linguistic performances of these characters are considered divergence (speech becomes less like those of interlocutors) in that they are using linguistic features that no one else in the film 'authentically' uses or no one they come in contact with uses. The character Kenny in the movie *Can't Hardly Wait* is an example. In these instances, the characters can be argued to be performing blackness in order to be associated with a particular group (although not present) or as a way to refuse conformity with the other white characters with which they interact. Because the authenticity of Will's language use is never questioned throughout the film and is even considered authentic by his brother and his brother's friends, it is Will who is considered an example of a successful character, while Kenny is not. Kenny's right to use racialized language is questioned within the movie and this questioning results in him abandoning it for a short time in the film. As is discussed more in Chapter 5, this illustrates that the second framework, speech accommodation theory (Giles & Powesland 1975), can be used to demonstrate part of the reason for why some characters are considered successful while others are not.

The role of the speaker also plays a part in authenticating the character. Goffman (1981) discusses the way in which speakers use words. Specifically, his conceptual

paradigm, referred to as "Participation Frameworks," focuses on how participants use utterances to construct complex identities. His analysis allows us to view conversation participants as more than just being embedded within the context but as involved in the process of building context. The Participant Framework, or the collaborative efforts of participants in a particular conversation, distinguishes between multiple types of speakers. These include the Animator (person who speaks), Author (one who constructs the words), Principal (the one whose message is being conveyed), and Figure (a person who is portrayed in the talk). His model of conversation does well in demonstrating the complexity of quoted or imagined speech (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004). Consider for example the analysis of a scene from the movie *Soul Man* in Figure 3.1. In this scene, the blackface character, Mark is having dinner at his girlfriend's house. During dinner, his girlfriend's mother who believes he is black has a daydream about him playing the stereotypical role of the black savage:

Figure 3.1[6] Goffman's model of a speaker as applied to the movie Soul Man



Goffman (1981) states that together, the Animator, Author, and Principal make up the Production Format of an utterance. A speaker is held more or less accountable for his words depending on his or her participant status or "the relation between any single participant and his or her utterance viewed from the point of reference of the larger social gathering" (Goodwin & Goodwin 2004: 222). Therefore, in the example above, one must take into account that the pronouns *my* and *I* do not actually refer to Mark the animator, but to the imagined speaker in Mark's girlfriend's mother's head. Furthermore, viewers/hearers of this speech should also recognize that white women specifically refers

[6] Adapted from Goodwin and Goodwin (2004: 224).

to the mother (and possibly her daughter) who therefore becomes the Figure in addition to being the Author and Principal. The action in the scene is also important to consider along with the speech because it adds to the message being conveyed. Therefore in instances where the characters are only Animators of the speech, the focus is not on the racial authenticity of the character, but the ideologies of the other characters in the film. Since this is a scripted film, it can also be argued that the ideologies of the screenwriter and director are also revealed. Therefore considering their racial identity is important in the reading of the performances of the characters as well. How their racial background may inform the reading of Mark's performance is discussed in Chapter 4. These three frameworks — the *sociocultural linguistic approach*, the *speech accommodation theory*, and the *Participant Framework* — work together to underline the concerns that sociolinguists have "with the linguistic construction of identity in social interaction and the relationship between individual speaker agency and larger social structures and processes" (Bucholtz & Hall 2008: 404).

Because the subject of my dissertation is the representations of language, identity, and authenticity in *film*, I want to comment on my decision to focus on linguistic theory rather than film theory (Miller & Stam 1999; Rushton & Bettinson 2010; Slagle 2012). Theories of race and cinema, which examines underrepresented groups in cinema, and structuralist film theory, which emphasizes "how films convey meaning through the use of codes and conventions not dissimilar to the way languages are used to construct meaning in communication" (Slagle 2012: 11), are useful approaches to my study.

Although my dissertation looks at how linguistic practices are part and parcel of film practices, film theory will only form a backdrop to my analysis.

3.2 Methods of Data Collection

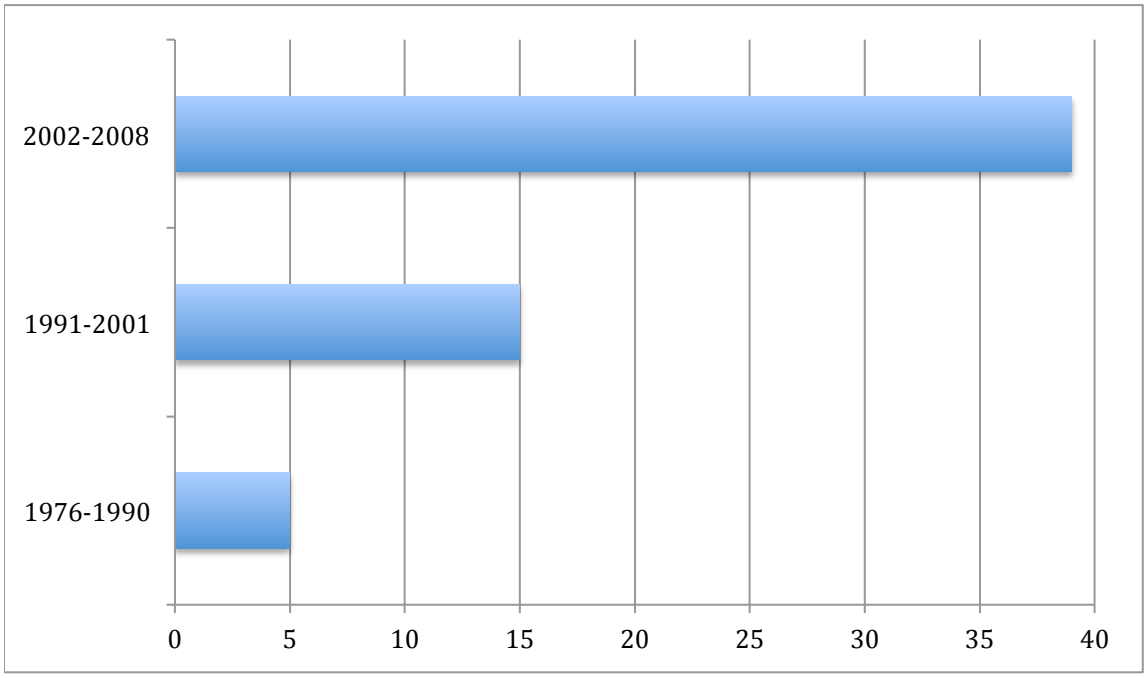
I use a qualitative analysis to examine three types of discourse in order to capture the range of ways in which linguistic practices construct and represent social realities: (1) explicitly metapragmatic discourse about wigger identity (Chapter 5), (2) performances of wigger and blackface identity through language ideologically linked to blackness (Chapters 4 and 5), and (3) descriptions and comparative analyses of linguistic features that demonstrate how many of the features used derive social meaning from specific contexts (Chapter 6). Although not all of the films in my study focus on reasons *why* whites may perform the wigger identity, 12 out of the 21 films with wigger characters contain at least one metapragmatic discussion of why they have adopted this persona. These discussions include reasons for linguistic and appearance choices.

3.2.1 Films used in the study

The data for this project has been drawn from a corpus of 59 films that feature one or more European American characters who use white linguistic representations of African Americans. Before conducting this study I was aware of all of the films with blackface characters and most of the widely released films with wigger characters (e.g. *Bringing Down the House, Bulworth*, *Can't Hardly Wait*, *Malibu's Most Wanted*); however, independent or low budget films were found through internet searches and

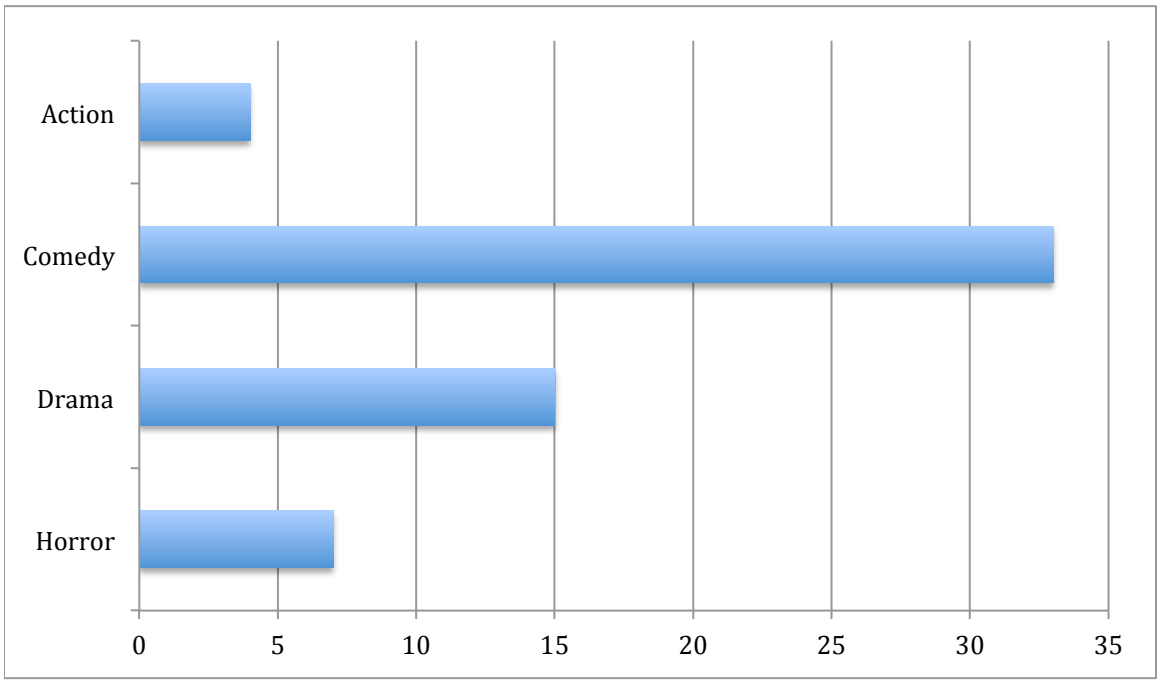
emails from colleagues and friends who knew my research topic and wanted to share movies they knew of that contained a character type in my study. As shown in Figure 3.2, films that include these characters can be found as early as 1976 and as recent as 2008, with over half (39 out of 59) the films between 2002-2008. All of the wigger characters are found in films after 1990, which corresponds with the embracing of hip hop music by white suburban youth during the 90's. The fact that most of the modern blackface characters are found in films before 1990 (*Tropic Thunder* came out in 2008) is more than likely related to the controversial nature of the blackface tradition in America.

Figure 3.2 Number of films featuring white Hollywood AAL, according to year



Even though the films are drawn from different genres that include comedy, horror, action, and drama with most of them predictably coming from comedy (Figure 3.3), they share a number of structural and semiotic features which suggests that they are borrowing from similar types of texts and thereby co-constructing meaning. Even when the film comes from one of the other genres, the character using white linguistic stylizations of African Americans is usually the one providing the comedy relief (Bucholtz 2011b). This seems to suggest that the main purpose of these stylizations and the characters that use them is to add humor.

Figure 3.3 Films featuring white Hollywood AAL, according to genre[7]



[7] Adapted from Bucholtz 2007.

Since parody is one of the ways in which a speaker can take a linguistic stance to whatever topic is being discussed (Dentith 2000), the use of humor through parody in these films allows the broaching of controversial topics such as stereotypes about race and gender in that it invites the viewer to be critical of the performances. It does this by identifying particular linguistic and other stylistic practices and comically overplaying them in such a way that they become visible (Dentith 2000). Humor through the use of parody can be used to contest dominant ideologies; however, because parody also "has the paradoxical effect of preserving the very text that it seeks to destroy" (Dentith 2000: 36), it also reproduces the ideologies and stereotypes it asks the audience to critique. Even though these films may be attacking the circulating images of the hypersexual, hypermasculine, black male, there is the chance that these performances can be reinforcing them, leading those who have limited exposure to black males to believe that these representations are true.

Research has revealed that humor plays a role in linguistic crossing. For example, Rampton's (2005) study demonstrated that his informants found certain types of crossing amusing and that many of them did not participate in crossing seriously, but only in a joking manner. These findings are echoed in Hewitt (1986) and seem to establish the idea that parody and humor can be considered important aspects in constructing a cultural identity (Fought 2006). The fact that the performances in the present study are framed as humorous is intriguing because humor can "be an important signal of ingroup membership, either because the nature of the joke itself relies on ingroup knowledge to be understood, or because making fun of others is a way of asserting our intimacy with

them" (Fought 2006: 164). It can be maintained then that one use of humor in these films is to broach the difficult topic of race and signal to the viewing audience that filmmakers understand that certain performances of race are problematic.

For the present analysis, I focus on a subset of 24 films (Table 3.1). These films include characters that are portrayed as middle-to-upper-middle class males. Films that contained characters with these characteristics treated their uses of ethnically-marked linguistic features as problematic, which can be used to provide insight into the role of class in racial performances. Although most of the characters are male, female characters play a part in my analysis when discussing ideologies of authenticity and identity of the wigger characters. Only 5 of the films feature females using white linguistic representations of African Americans with only 2 of the 5 featuring female characters where their use of the features are highlighted. This fact is "suggestive of the ideological nexus of race and gender embodied by the wigger figure" (Bucholtz 2007: 8). Excluded from the present discussion are films such as *Coach Carter* and *8 Mile* where the characters that use racialized linguistic features are working-class because these characters are usually found in a predominately black setting and thus are portrayed as cultural and linguistic insiders. Even though these characters can provide insight into intersections between race, class, and gender, they are interesting for reasons not discussed in the present investigation.

At this point, I must note the numerical discrepancy between the movies containing blackface characters and those containing wigger characters. The wigger character can be argued to have become a staple in modern American popular culture,

and because of this it was easy to find films that contained this character-type. On the other hand, the history of blackface performance in America made it was quite difficult to find modern films with blackface characters (there are only 3 films in my data). However, the choice of including both character types in my analysis was to underline the similarities and differences between the two while suggesting that some incarnations of the wigger character may be updated versions of the blackface character.

Table 3.1 Films featuring blackface/wigger characters who use white Hollywood AAL

Title	Date	Genre	Focal character and actor	Director and U.S. Distributor
Bamboozled	2000	Comedy	Dunwitty (Michael Rapaport)	Spike Lee, New Line Cinema
Be Cool	2005	Comedy	Raji (Vince Vaughn)	F. Gary Gray, MGM
Black and White	1999	Drama	Charlie (Bijou Phillips), Raven (Gaby Hoffmann), Will King (William Lee Scott), Wren (Elijah Wood), Kim (Kim Matulova)	James Toback, Screen Gems
Bringing Down the House	2003	Comedy	Peter (Steve Martin), Howie (Eugene Levy)	Adam Shankman, Buena Vista Pictures
Bulworth	1998	Comedy	Senator Bulworth (Warren Beatty)	Warren Beatty, Twentieth-Century Fox
The Bros	2007	Comedy	John Tindall & Joachim Wiese	Jonathan Figg, Lionsgate
Can't Hardly Wait	1998	Comedy	Kenny (Seth Green), Homeboy #1 (Branden Williams), Homeboy #2 (Bobby Jacoby)	Harry Elfont and Deborah Kaplan, Columbia Pictures
Detour	2003	Horror	Loopz/Lawrence (Aaron Buer)	Steve Taylor, MTI Home Video
Drive-Thru	2007	Horror	Tony (Haven Lamoureux)	Brendan Cowles and Shane Kuhn, Lions Gate Films
Go!	1999	Comedy	Tiny (Breckin Meyer)	Doug Liman, Columbia Pictures
Gran Torino	2008	Drama	Trey (Scott Eastwood)	Clint Eastwood, Warner Bros.
Havoc	2005	Drama	Emily (Bijou Phillips), Sam (Joseph Gordon-Levitt), Toby (Mike Vogel)	Barbara Kopple, New Line Home Video
Malibu's Most Wanted	2003	Comedy	B-Rad (Jamie Kennedy)	John Whitesell, Warner Bros. Pictures
Manic	2001	Drama	Michael (Elden Henson)	Jordan Melamed, IFC Films
Pervert	2005	Comedy	Jonathan Yudis	Jonathan Yudis

Table 3.1 Continued

Silver Streak	1976	Comedy /Action/	George (Gene Wilder)	Arthur Hiller, 20th Century Fox
Soul Man	1986	Comedy	Mark (C. Thomas Howell)	Steve Miner, New World Pictures
Soul Plane	2004	Comedy	Billy (Ryan Pinkston)	Jessy Terrero, MGM
Take the Lead	2006	Drama	Kurd (Jonathan Malen)	Liz Friedlander, New Line Cinema
Tropic Thunder	2008	Comedy	Kirk Lazarus (Robert Downey Jr.)	Ben Stiller, Paramount Pictures
Underclass man	2005	Comedy	Eddie (Vishiss), Alexander (Johnny Lewis)	Marcos Siega, Miramax
Waiting…	2005	Comedy	T-Dog (Max Kasch), Nick (Andy Milonakis)	Rob McKittrick, Lions Gate Films
Whiteboyz	1999	Drama	Flip (Danny Hoch), James (Dash Mihok), Trevor (Mark Webber)	Marc Levin, Fox Searchlight Pictures
The Young Unknowns	2000	Drama	Charlie (Devon Gummersall),	Catherine Jelski, Indican Pictures

3.3 METHODS OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In order to understand how language gets its meaning from practice, I use methods of discourse analysis (DA) to examine how linguistic features at all levels of discourse including phonology, phonetics, syntax, lexicon, and speech events are utilized in these films (Gee 2011). I choose this set of methods because it "looks at meaning as an integration of ways of saying (informing), doing (action), and being (identity), and grammar as a set of tools to bring about this integration" (Gee 2011: 8). It is particularly useful in demonstrating the linguistic/discursive resources that speakers/filmmakers use to construct characters' linguistic and racial (in)authenticities. I have two main methods of discourse analysis. The first one is a feature-based analysis and the second is an ideological and interactional analysis of how and why certain features and practices are

seen as (in)authentic. Through DA, I am able to establish how ideologies are reproduced or contested and how identities are performed in specific moments of linguistic use and representation; these social constructs are not abstractly existing, but they are constructed through practice, specifically linguistic (and other semiotic) practice.

3.3.1 Transcription

I concentrate on those elements of the dialogue in the films that are deemed relevant in the context and the arguments I am making. I transcribe the language of the characters in their wigger or blackface character capacity. In other words, if the character is not using language in order to construct the identities in which I am describing, it is not included in the analysis. The only exception to this would be to highlight differences between a character's performance of the wigger identity and their non-wigger identity. I transcribe the language orthographically, only using the International Phonetic Alphabet when discussing phonological features or in other areas where phonological contrasts are salient. The orthographic choices follow written conventions of writing except in some cases where nonstandard speech is used, such as in writing words that end in –ing a –in in order to emphasize the fact that the characters pronounce [ŋ] as [n] . I never focus on all physical features that are present in any given scene even if they may be meaningful in other contexts. Unless a narrow transcription is needed, all transcriptions are broad transcriptions. I use notational devices such as underlines to highlight important aspects of speech and italics in order to focus on a specific feature that I am discussing in a particular dialogue. A colon after a vowel indicates long or drawn out vowels, while

parenthetical information describes things that are going on in the setting; such as explaining facial or hand gestures or the actions of the characters, like dancing.

3.2.2 Labeling

My description in this study is of representations of black speech as perceived in and by "white Hollywood". By "white", I mean in terms of how white images are dominant within Hollywood and in terms of how the actors and most of the creators of these films are White. I am not describing black speech as used by African Americans or European Americans in naturalistic settings. However, in analyzing the idiolectal practices of movie characters, I treat the data collected similarly to how I would treat naturalistic data. Furthermore, in describing the linguistic features as they are used by the white characters in the films, I use the terms *white linguistic representations of African Americans*, *ethnically-marked linguistic features*, *racialized linguistic features indexical of blackness* and *stylized features associated with black speech* interchangeably. These labels were chosen not because I am assigning the linguistic features to any particular racial group but to underline the fact that these features are often *read* as belonging to a racialized group, specifically, African Americans.

I switch between the labels Black and African American as well as White and European American because a distinction between the two labels is not relevant to my analysis. Being able to use both only serves to reduce repetition. Capitalization of the labels black and white are utilized when they are used as a noun as in: *Blacks are*

underrepresented while lower-case usage of the words occur when they are used as an adjective as in: *white people are the majority in America*.

The last three labels I want to discuss in the chapter are *blackface*, *minstrels/minstrelsy*, and *wigger*. I use the term blackface and minstrel to refer to both the blackface minstrels (and their performances of minstrelsy) of the 19th century as well as to the characters in the three films in which they darken their skin tone in their performances of blackness. My use of the label for the latter group is in no way intended to equate the two character types or their performances, but to capture the impact of the 19th century form in their performances as well as to describe the way these characters may be read by viewing audiences. In this dissertation, the use of the label *figurative blackface* is in reference to those characters in my study who do not actually darken their skin, but who engage in minstrel-like performances (see Chapter 5) while the use of *literal blackface* refers to those characters that are part of the original 19th century practice of minstrelsy.

The website guardian.co.uk which is a part of *The Observer* claims that wigger was coined in 1992 by trend spotter Marian Salzman on the Oprah Winfrey Show. She used it to refer to the "cultural trend of suburban white kids kidnapping black street styles" (Hoggard 2003, para 1). However, Roediger (1995) states that he first became aware of the word in 1989. It was used as a slur by white suburban students in a Detroit school to refer to other students in the school. It held the meaning of 'white niggers' or whites who acted 'too black' (659). Roediger further points out that white rapper MC Search, of 3rd Base, heard the term in the early 1980's by classmates who disapproved of

his wearing of hip hop clothing. During this time, it was being still being used by Whites to describe other Whites.

Although Whites use the word, wigger has been argued to be used affectionately by African Americans who have friends they describe as being only phenotypically white. In fact, Gary Miles (Roediger 1995: 660) argues that it was created by African Americans to name Whites who embraced African American cultural forms and values instead of just dabbling in hip hop. It still had the meaning of 'white nigger' but pronounced in the non-rhotic form [wɪgə] with the reappropriated meaning found in rap— one of inclusion and camaraderie found in 'nigga'. It also has a neutral meaning, describing those Whites who identify with black culture in some way. All of the previous descriptors do not necessarily pinpoint language; however, there are some who point out the derogatory use of it for those Whites who 'talk black' or who talk 'with Negro affectations' (Major, Dictionary: 122). In summary, 'wigger' is claimed to be used by Whites to other Whites-dismissively, acceptingly by Blacks to Whites, derogatorily by Whites to other Whites as well as approvingly by Whites to other Whites.

In representations of popular culture, the wigger character is inspired by white American teenagers and young adults who began to adopt hip hop culture in the 1990s. In film, the term is mostly used by black characters to white characters that either identify or are pretending to identify with black culture. One example to consider is when the black character Widow (played by Steve Harris) in the movie *Bringing Down the House* tells the white character Peter Sanderson (played by Steve Martin) to "quit the wigger act" after Sanderson performs what is interpreted as a wigger identity (see Chapter 5) in

order to get into a night club in order to see Widow. Another example can be found in the movie *Malibu's Most Wanted* when the black characters Bloodbath and Tre (played by Taye Diggs and Anthony Anderson, respectively) yell "wigger please!" at the character B-rad (played by Jamie Kennedy) when he resumes his wigger identity after dropping it for a bit (see chapter 6). In each of these cases, the black characters used the term because they did not believe that the white characters' behavior was reflective of their true identity. These are just two of many that illustrate that the wigger identity in film is usually considered a denaturalization or a "phenomenon whereby an identity is held up as inauthentic or unreal – as literally incredible" (Bucholtz 2003: 409). Therefore when the term is used in film, it is often used to describe those believed to be inauthentic. Thus I use the label in a similar way when referring to characters and identities that are framed as inauthentic in the films.

Chapter 4: Blackface and Linguistic Passing in Film

4.1 What is minstrelsy?

Blackface minstrelsy was a nineteenth century theatrical practice that was stationed mostly in the urban North (Lott 1993). These performances contained white men who mocked black men, women and slavery for entertainment and profit. It is considered to have been the most popular form of entertainment of the nineteenth century (Lott 1993; Rogin 1998). Although when most people think of blackface performances they think of racist caricatures of blacks, it is argued by some to be part of a resistant culture where working class Whites used it to make statements about their present situation (Lott 1993).

At a time when America did not have a distinctive national identity (during slavery), blackface is argued to have provided it with one (Rogin 1998) by playing a part in forming American popular culture (Strausbaugh 2006). When Whites mired their faces with burnt cork, their performances claimed to speak for both themselves as well as Blacks (Rogin 1998). Once Blacks began to participate in minstrel performances, it split the blackface figure into two (Rogin 1998). There was one where Whites were argued to perform blackness better than Blacks and then another where performances of blackface were performed by Blacks. Due to the pressure to be successful, blackface performances by Blacks did little to alter the minstrel tradition. Instead they reinforced the idea that Whites were performing blackness accurately by imitating their performances by using

burnt cork to further darken their skin and appropriating the traditional caricatures created by Whites, thereby perpetrating the racist stereotypes.

We can see remnants of minstrel-like performances in most forms of modern popular entertainment - including television, film, music, and literature. Lhamon (1998) discusses "lore cycles" or the way in which certain elements of popular culture thought to have run its course find their way back into the spot light years after it is presumed to be over. Certain elements means that it is not the entire performance that resurfaces, but one or two features of the performance. For minstrel performances, features that cycle are vernacular-like speech patterns, costumes, singing, and current stereotypes about black people. Some performances include all of the features while others may include only one.

For example in 2009, Popeye's CMO, GSD&M released the first of a series of television and radio commercials that centered on a character called "Annie the Chicken Queen". I have only been able to see one incarnation of these ads because they can no longer be found online[8]. In this commercial, Annie the Chicken Queen has a fake southern accent and says things like "mm hmm, not in my [ma] kitchen". I have to admit that I personally was not offended by this particular commercial. However, I can see some of the stereotypes that have plagued black women for centuries. The sassy black woman who "tells it like it is" while being in the kitchen (cooking fried chicken no less)

[8] If you click on any of the youtube links that once contained the video you will get the following message: "This video is no longer available due to a copyright claim by GSD". This seems to indicate that Popeye's might be trying to control the discussion surrounding these ads by not allowing them to be readily viewed.

is reminiscent of the Mammy[9] archetype with a dash of Sapphire[10]. Popeye's CMO Dick Lynch describes Annie as a reflection of the brand's personality, which is "honest, vibrant, youthful and authentic" (Wong 2009). The question is, what makes Annie the Chicken Queen authentic? Is it the fake accent that makes her authentic? Is it the fact that she says things like "I work my fanny off making this chicken perfect, and they practically give it away" (Wong 2009)? Or is it the fact that in one commercial she is described as patting her head around the food and dancing? The fact that Lynch thinks that Annie the Chicken Queen represents an authentic black woman is similar to Whites of the 19th century thinking that onstage blackface performances were authentic. It appears that no matter the time period, when Whites and Blacks both literally and figuratively "black up" and mock Blacks through language, music, and dance, some Whites believe that they are hearing/witnessing actual facets of black people and their culture (Lott 1993: 226-30).

On the other hand, in June of 2011, Jon Stewart was accused by Chris Wallace on Fox News Sunday of performing a dialect reminiscent of *Amos 'n' Andy*[11]. This occurred after showing a clip from Jon Stewart's *The Daily Show* where Stewart imitates the speech of black GOP presidential candidate Herman Cain. Was Stewart's imitation a minstrelesque performance or was it something different? According to Eric Lott, "every time you hear an expansive white man drop into his version of Black English, you are in

[9] Mammy is a stereotypical character that represents black woman as happy-go-lucky, domestic servants.
[10] The Sapphire character is usually portrayed as sassy and emasculating.
[11] *Amos 'n' Andy* was a radio show turned television that ran in some incarnation of the two from 1928-1960. Syndicated reruns lasted until 1966 ("Amos 'n' Andy" 2012). In its radio form, white actors voiced African American characters and in its television form black actors played the characters. The Sapphire caricature is based off of one of the characters in the show.

the presence of blackface's unconscious return" (1993: 5). However, I would like to argue that what Stewart was doing was different than what the characters in the present chapter do. Stewart was not presenting his version of Black English; he was mocking the speech of one particular man. It was not supposed to be a representation of how Blacks in general speak. I contend that there is a difference between trying to 'talk black' with no specific black person in mind and voicing the speech of a specific person that you can point to and say "that is who I am trying to sound like".

4.1.1 Traditional minstrelsy versus modern day minstrelsy

Because each cycle of minstrelsy only duplicates certain aspects each time it resurfaces, performances that may be considered minstrel-like in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries are different in many respects from minstrelsy of the nineteenth century. These include the fact that traditional minstrels strove to entertain with their music and dancing and therefore, they were attentive to the poetics and wanted to showcase their artistic skills. Traditional minstrelsy provided performances that showcased skills that they excelled at, such as musical and dance ability. The updated, present day minstrel-like portrayals discussed in this chapter do not display such virtuosic performances. Instead, they showcase how incompetent they are at executing blackness. However, the actor must still demonstrate comedic timing. Although, Robert Downey Jr.'s portrayal of a black character in *Tropic Thunder* has been argued to be much more accurate than those of C. Thomas Howell and Gene Wilder in their respective films, this does not necessarily mean that the former two actors do not have the ability to produce a

believable performance, but instead suggests that it was not their intent to do so. Alternatively, they may be considered competent at performing incompetence. This leads me to another difference found in the performances in the movies that I am analyzing—the presentations are *metaparodic* in that the performers are in on the joke and they are making fun of themselves and the tradition of blackface as much (or more) as they are reinforcing many of the stereotypes that they are challenging. A large part of traditional minstrelsy was *parodic* in nature in that one of their goals was to make fun of black people and their culture.

What also seems to be different between these updated minstrel-like performances and traditional minstrelsy is that present day minstrelsy seems to be a middle- to upper-middle-class performance whereas traditional minstrels were working-class. I reason that this fact is why the authorship of present day blackface characters is presented differently. Both use ventriloquized dialect (Lott 1993; 1996) where black voices are ventriloquized by white bodies; however, as I argue in section 4.3, the participant status (Goffman 1981; Goodwin & Goodwin 2004) of the modern minstrels makes their ventriloquized act less offensive. Working class minstrels can be argued to have something in common with Blacks — similar economic status. Middle class minstrels do not share this commonality and therefore can be argued to not truly understand the plight of working class people.

A remnant of traditional minstrelsy found in modern day minstrel-like performances is that it still defines blackness for those audience members who have

limited contact with black people. Because of this, it should be considered just as dangerous for the perceptions of Blacks. As Lhamon states, minstrelsy is still "a defining wedge for the construction of whiteness, and an albatross around the neck of black culture that has yet to be lifted" (1998: 57). Coleman (1998) discusses what she calls Neo-Minstrelsy in terms of black situation comedies and notes that it "describes the full circle that Black situation comedy has come in the treatment of Blackness, explicitly acknowledging a renewed emphasis upon the ridicule and the subordination of Black culture as homogenously deviant" (111). Her statement suggests that whether it is a black or white actor who is participating in minstrel-like performances there has been very little evolution in the representation of Blacks or their culture.

Table 4.1 Comparison of Traditional and Present day minstrelsy

Traditional	**Present day**
Artistic skills	No artistic skills
Comedic timing	Comedic timing
Parodic	Metaparodic
Working-class	Middle to upper middle class
Ventriloquized dialect	Ventriloquized dialect

4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE FILMS AND CHARACTERS DISCUSSED IN THIS CHAPTER

There are three films discussed in this chapter. Each of them participates in both linguistic and visual passing by drawing on features that make up white representations of blackness.

4.2.1 Blackface characters in this study

The first film is the comedy-thriller, *Silver Streak*. It is a movie that stars Gene Wilder and Richard Pryor. The plot centers on a train ride where Gene Wilder's character George witnesses a murder and falls in love with one of the female passengers. While trying to save said love interest, he meets Richard Pryor's character, Grover (a street-wise thief). In trying to evade the cops George resorts to darkening his skin with shoe polish while donning a Jamaican tam and Grover's jacket (see Illustration 5.1). In the end, he gets the girl and a black sidekick.

Illustration 4.1. Gene Wilder (as blackface George) and Richard Pryor in *Silver Streak*[12]

The second film is *Soul Man* — a comedy that focuses on such issues as interracial dating, affirmative action, and race relations. The premise of this film is C. Thomas Howell's character Mark who is a wealthy white male who wants to attend Harvard Law School. However, at the last moment, his parents decide not to pay for it.

[12] Image taken from threepwud.com

Not believing that he will be able to pay for it himself, he changes his skin color by taking a pill, and wears a curly wig (see Illustration 4.2) in order to benefit from an affirmative action student loan. While there, he falls in love with a single, black mother and learns that contrary to what he naively believes ("*It's going to be great. These are the 80's, man. It's the Cosby decade. America loves black people.*") being a black male is not easy in the 80's. This is demonstrated to him through things such as racial profiling that leads to him being arrested and being evicted. At the end of the movie, he gets the black girl and is a much better (white) man through his experience as a black man.

Illustration 4.2. C. Thomas Howell as Mark in *Soul Man* with and without blackface[13]

The third film is *Tropic Thunder*—a satiric comedy about actors in Hollywood who take themselves too seriously. This is most obviously seen through Robert Downey Jr.'s character Kirk Lazarus—an actor who surgically darkens his skin in order to play a black soldier in a film about the Vietnam War (see Illustration 4.3). Throughout the

[13] Image taken from moviespics.wcgame.ru

movie, Kirk Lazarus refuses to break character and remains Sergeant Lincoln Osiris both on camera and off. This means that he continually uses Osiris' version of black speech.

Illustration 4.3. Robert Downey Jr. as Kirk Lazarus and Sergeant Lincoln Osiris in Tropic Thunder[14]

Early in *Tropic Thunder,* the director of the *tropic thunder*[15] is informed that he is a month behind schedule and must get back on schedule or risk the film being cancelled. With this in mind, the director drops the actors into the middle of the jungle in order to film them "guerilla-style" which means that they are no longer on a movie set, that the cameras are hidden in strategic areas, and that they have engineered the special effects so that they are explosions at specific moments. This is all done without the knowledge of the actors.

[14] Images taken from powerslam2.proboards.com and hollywood.com.

[15] *Tropic Thunder* with both the T's capitalized refers to the 2008 production, *tropic thunder* with both T's in lower-case refers to the movie being shot within the film. In other words, *Tropic Thunder* stars Ben Stiller, Robert Downey Jr, Jack Black, and Brandon T. Jackson while *tropic thunder* stars Tugg Speedman, Kirk Lazarus, Jeff Portnoy, and Alpa Chino. At the completion of *tropic thunder* the movie is renamed *Tropic Blunder*.

4.3 LINGUISTIC PASSING VERSUS LINGUISTIC CROSSING

In the following chapter on linguistic crossing, the characters' use of language is considered crossing because the characters are using language that is read as Black. However, they are not performing as a black person, but rather a person who uses racialized language and possibly has cultural insight into black lives. The language used in the present chapter is considered passing (Bucholtz 1995; Hall 1995; Fought 2006), because the characters are passing as a black character during the time they are performing linguistic features associated with black people. Racial passing is most frequently discussed when referring to non-whites passing for white. However, it "may refer to the crossing of any line that divides social groups where one is held in higher esteem than the other " (Wirth-Nesher 2006: 59). Passing is different from crossing in that passing requires the "ability to be taken for a member of a social category other than one's own" (Bucholtz 1995: 351).

Although both crossing and passing are a type of performance, passing implies both performance and deception. In other words, the characters in these films are performing in order to deceive the other characters in the film—"performance as deception" (Wirth-Nesher 2006). Passing in these movies is unlike passing in real life in that it is overacted in order to call attention to the audiences that the performance is being used to deauthenticate themselves. Real life passing is "performance as the actualization of the real and the embodiment of the known" (Alexander 2006: 73). The performative move is to assume an identity in order benefit from being the other in a particular context (Alexander 2006). In these movies, that includes anything from darkening their skin with

the purpose of attending an Ivy League college (*Soul Man*) or to avoid detection by police (*Silver Streak*). "The performative accomplishment of passing is a dialogically negotiated act between the one passing and those who would accept or deny, support or sanction, that passage" (Alexander 2006: 70-71). In this way, it is similar to crossing.

Crossing and passing are not mutually exclusive. Passing can be considered a type of crossing. For example, because the characters discussed in the following chapter are using a dialect of a class that is not their own, their representations of crossing can be considered class passing (Wirth-Nesher 2006). Furthermore, similarly to crossing representations found in film, the ethnically-marked linguistic features presented in passing representations is co-constructed by a variety of real people: the actor who animates, the director who possibly advises the actor, as well as the screenwriter who may have written the black speech. In this way, these co-constructed representations are different from those labeled wiggers[16] in the real world as well as those who may pass for Black in real life. Dissimilar to passing representations, crossing can be done by anyone with access to the linguistic code (Fought 2006). As we will see in the following chapter, it does not require validation from legitimated members of the speech community. In fact, those inside and outside of the speech community are often critical of the crossers, but their practices are still considered crossing. Oppositely, passing usually requires validation from both inside and outside members (Fought 2006).

Crossing representations also differ because the characters are perceived in the film to be the animators, authors, and principal of the words spoken, while the passing

[16] See Chapter 3 for a description of this word.

representations discussed in this chapter, are always the animator, or as Goffman (1981) states, "the talking machine, a body engaged in acoustic activity, or if you will an individual active in the role of utterance production" (144), but are rarely the author or owner of words (Goffman 1981) and never the principal, or person whose message is being communicated. By doing this, white representations of linguistic passing by such characters do not comment on racial authenticity but focuses on the ideologies of the other characters in the film or reflects upon race relations. In the following section, I discuss the usefulness of Goffman's Participant Framework (see Chapter 3) in explaining how the level of responsibility of the passing characters are different from those of the crossing characters and the effect of that difference on the perceptions of the characters.

4.3.1 Passing representations of blackface characters

Goffman's (1981) Participant Framework can be used to shed light on the relationship between a participant and his or her utterances and how those utterances are received by others. For example, in Example 4.1 the blackface character Mark is at the dinner table with his white girlfriend's family who all believe he is African American. Each of the family members (father, mother, and brother) has a daydream about Mark in which he is imagined to be a savage, pimp, and the R&B singer Prince. These daydreams reflect the ideologies that the family holds about African Americans, particularly African American men. In the father's daydream where Mark is a pimp, stereotypical linguistic features at the lexical, morphosyntactic, phonological, and prosodic levels can be found:

Example 4.1 *Soul Man*

Mark: [falsetto] Go get my heroin and hypodermic needle bitch. Get me some mo' watermelon while you at it. White fat-ass slut. What you lookin' at?

Although it is Mark speaking in this scene, he is merely the animator. Because this is the father's daydream, he is the author of the words (played by Leslie Nielsen) whose message and ideologies are being communicated. In his eyes, because Mark is African American, he is a watermelon-eating, drug-using, pimp. These three things draw on some of the worst stereotypes of Blacks that go as far back as slavery (i.e. Blacks eat watermelon). Because of this, the father is also the principal.

In another scene where Mark's parents make an unexpected visit while he is still in blackface, Mark becomes both the animator and the author of the stylized features of black speech; however, it is his parents who are the principal because it is their position that is established by the words spoken, it is their beliefs that have been stated (Goffman 1981). Mark only uses this language, because he believes/knows that his parents hold these stereotypes about African Americans men and would expect them to speak this way.

Example 4.2 *Soul Man*

(Mark enters kitchen and Dorothy gasps)

Dad: Get back Dorthy. I'll handle this. I-I'm warning you, I'm armed.

Mark: (realizing that he forgot to cover his face) What's happenin', brotha? Get down. Get down. Lookin' good mama, lookin' good.Well I gots to be goin' now.

Dad: Did he have a knife? I think he had a knife.

By their reactions, we see that Mark's parents have preconceived notions about African American males as dangerous people. As soon as Mark in blackface enters the kitchen, they assume that he must be there to harm them (line 2). It never occurs to them that the African American male may be a friend of Mark's. Furthermore, they are so shocked by the appearance of an African American that they do not even realize that he is wearing the exact same sweater Mark was wearing when he greeted them at the door or previously spoke to them in the kitchen. What (4.1) and (4.2) demonstrate is that in this film, stylistic features of black speech are used to illustrate the ideologies of the other characters and not Mark. And in stark contrast to the crossing characters in the following chapter, it is not used as a form of authentication.

In addition to reading Mark's performance through the ideologies of the other characters in the film, the ideologies of the filmmakers (i.e. the director and screenplay writer) should also be considered. *Soul Man* was directed by Steve Miner and the screenplay was written by Carol Black. Both individuals are European American. One interpretation of the film is that Mark should not be punished for passing as Black because he has learned that being Black was not as enjoyable as he thought it would be. This revelation occurs most obviously in a scene where he is arrested for 'driving while black' (Smitherman 2006) and is locked in jail with white males who beat him up because they believe he is Black. Although throughout the film, he continually lies to his black law professor and black love interest, at the end of the film he has had an attitude adjustment in that he can no longer tolerate black racial jokes, is possibly considered a little less White because he can no longer listen to the Beach Boys, and is working in the

school cafeteria instead of benefiting from the scholarship he attained while passing. This seems to suggest that the filmmakers are implying that Mark should be able to get away with his transgressions as long as he has learned a lesson and has atoned for his wrong doings through a promise to do good in the future. Mark's transition can be compared with the transitions the filmmakers make in the movie overall (Leo 2007). The first part of the movie uses racial politics in order to play up racial humor; they then 'atone' for it by preaching that it was wrong and trying to deal with the issues more seriously. Because of this, I believe that it is important to question whether the story would have played out the same way if the filmmakers were Black.

The linguistic representation of African Americans by blackface characters also illustrates how inconsistent it is with the characters' expected behavior. In an effort to elicit laughs, these parodies of the white male who 'acts black' still perpetuate demeaning stereotypes of black males; however, steps are sometimes taken by the actors to prevent the performances from being overly offensive. For example, the script for the movie *Silver Streak* originally had a white character walk in on George after he had applied the shoe polish to his face and actually believe him to be a black man. However, Richard Pryor, the African American actor who plays Grover, pushed for the character to be changed to a black man who was not at all fooled by the disguise (Robin 2011). In doing this, the scene changed from one that could have been incredibly insulting, to one where a black voice was allowed to both interject humor as well as the concerns of Blacks in the viewing audience (see line 10 of Example 4.4).

In the examples below, Gene Wilder's character George's performance of blackness is usually considered by critics and the viewing audience not to be offensive. Three reasons for this could be that (1) George is 'taught' how to 'act black' by Grover, played (see 4.3 below), (2) there is no erasure of whiteness in the performance as is indicated by George's rhythmless dancing and the fact that he has to start the use of these linguistic features by convincing himself to "get some jive going" (line 1 of Example 4.4) and (3) George's stance of reluctance (line 3 of Example 4.3).

Example 4.3 *Silver Streak*

1	George:	May I speak?
2	Grover:	Yeah.
3	George:	This is crazy, it'll never work. Don't you understand?
4	Grover:	Are you kidding? Look at that. Al Jolson made a million bucks
5		looking like that. Now here you try it. Don't worry about your
6		eyes because you'll be wearing these. (Gives George sunglasses).
7		Yeah, looks good, now get that on top your head there. Here's my
8		jacket. I'm gon slide this beanie on yo' head. Here you go.
9		Alright, ace of duce. That's bad, man. Looking good. Now he'
10		take this radio. Now when you step out of he', you got to step out
11		of he' like King shit. right. You bad. Put that radio to yo' ear.
12		That's gonna help cover your face, right? Now just move with the
13		rhythm of the music. Move your body with the rhythm of the
14		music. That's all you got to remember, okay. Let me see you try
15		it. Step to the music. Step to the music, yeah. Step to the music.
16		Stop. How come you whiteys got such a tight ass, man? How you
17		gon walk out of here with a tan face and a white walk. Just get
18		into the music, come on George.

Example 4.4 *Silver Streak*

1	George:	Come on man, get some jive going. Be cool. Shake it don't but
2		break it. Hey man, how do I look? You look sharp. I feel sharp.
3		Ya hea'. I feel like the turn around midnight. Ya dig? Out of
4		sight. Get down, get down. Feelin' good, feelin' fine. Feelin' real
5		fine. That's it. Just loosen up those hips suga. All you whiteys
6		got a tight-ass. Yea, get that ass movin' the'. Out of sight. I'm a

7		macaroni. Get down. I'm the king. Number one baby.
8		Babababebabebe. (stops after seeing shoe shiner watching him) I- I,
9		I'm not.
10	Shoe shiner:	You must be in some serious trouble.

If you pay attention to the words spoken by Grover prior to the linguistic features used by George, you will see similarities between the two. George is basically reproducing Grover's words; therefore George is not the author of the stylized speech used in this film. Instead, it is Grover. Grover is also the principal and the ideologies that are expressed in the words in Example 4.4 including Whites being "tight-assed" (Example 4.3, line 16) and Blacks having rhythm (line 17). However, George is indeed the animator. Even when George is the author of the words (see 4.5), they don't come off as his and he does not really own up to them.

Example 4.5 *Silver Streak*

1	George:	Shit. That's my man. That's my main man. Bababababebaba. I
2		don't think we'll make it pass the cops.

Focusing on the ideologies and/or racial stereotypes of the supporting characters in these films allow the blackface characters in these more modern films to be less controversial than traditional blackface characters. When the focus is not on those things, the film may incorporate a black character whose more 'authentic' performance of blackness is supposed to contrast with the inauthentic performance by the white actor. As in the example below, the black character (in this case Alpa) may also serve as the voice of reason or help to release racial tension through comedy:

Example 4.6 *Tropic Thunder*

(Jeff is on the ground twitching while going through drug withdrawal)

Kevin: He doesn't look too good.

Jeff: Must drink, so I can throw something up!

Kevin: No, no. Don't drink that water! That water's like a petri dish! No, don't! Alpa, do you have any Booty Sweat?

Osiris: Yeah, get him chuggin' on some of Alpa's ass water. That'll bring him around. It's a cure-all. Man, what you coming out in movies for anyway? Did you need another revenue stream?

Alpa: For your information, my revenue stream currently generates $2 million a year in charitable contributions for my community.

Osiris: Hot damn.

Alpa: And why am I in this movie? Maybe I just knew I had to represent, because they had one good part in it for a black man and they gave it to Crocodile Dundee.

Osiris: Pump your brakes, kid. That man is a national treasure.

Alpa: I just wanted to throw another shrimp on your barbie.

Osiris: That shit ain't funny.

Kevin: Hey, fellas! It's hot! We're tired! It stinks!

Alpa: I'm just fuckin' with you, Kangaroo Jack! I'm sorry a dingo ate your baby.

Osiris: You know that's a true story? Lady lost her kid. You about to cross some fucking lines.

Kevin: Guys, relax and stuff.

Alpa: You know what? Fuck that, man! I'm sick of this koala-hugging nigga telling me…

(Osiris punches Alpa then pulls him into a hug)

Osiris: For 400 years, that word has kept us down.

Alpa: What the fuck?

Osiris: It took a whole lot of tryin' just to get up that hill. Now we up in the big leagues, gettin' our turn at bat. Long as we live, it's you and me, baby.

Alpa: That's the theme song for *The Jeffersons*[17]. You really need help.

Osiris: Yeah. Just 'cause it's the theme song, don't make it not true.

Alpa: You know what? I'm gonna tell you what's true. I'm gonna tag you back. You better believe that baby.

[17] *The Jeffersons* was a situation comedy that aired between 1975 and 1985 and followed an African American couple who moved from working-class to upper-middle-class.

Osiris' performance is an interesting one. Unlike *Soul Man* and *Silver Streak* where the characters using ethnically-marked linguistic features are animating the words and ideologies of other characters in the film who are played by other actors, Osiris is animating words that are authored by a character that is played also by Robert Downey Jr. In other words, there are two different characters, Kirk Lazarus who is the actor in the film and Sergeant Lincoln Osiris who is played by Kirk Lazarus in the film within the film. Robert Downey Jr. plays both characters. Sergeant Osiris is animating the words authored by Kirk Lazarus. Therefore, Osiris is not responsible for the words spoken and this creates a distance between the words and this character.

Alpa continues to be the voice of reason in the following example where he and Osiris have a metapragmatic discussion of the performance of blackface in Hollywood. As stated by Greene (2009), the use of blackface in this film "suggests that the tension between blackface as a vehicle for social and financial mobility and as a means to circulate negative stereotypes is still present in our post-Civil Rights period" (5) and this tension is played out in the conversation above. Specifically by Alpa's statement that his decision to be in the film within the film was based on the fact that he knew he had to represent Blacks because they gave a good role slated in the movie for a black actor to a white one. It is clear that Lazarus knows nothing about what it means to be Black and that everything he says and does is a result of the research he has done for the role and not from anything he may have experienced. This is evidenced most by his condemnation of Alpa Chino's use of the word *nigga* in example 4.6 through a quotation of *The Jefferson's* theme song.

The conversation in example 4.7 allows Lazarus to be self-reflexive about his performance of Osiris and realize that it might appear to be offensive to some. However, at this point in the film nothing really comes from it. Alpa is able to speak for those who may be offended by Osiris performance in this conversation by commenting on the fact that Osiris' speech and performance comes off as plantation style (line 15) and that the fact that Osiris is insistent on performing the character in this way makes him seem like a "dumbass". Stated differently, Alpa is pointing out the inauthentic nature of performance.

Example 4.7 *Tropic Thunder*

1	(Alpa and Osiris see Tugg performing *Simple Jack*[18] live for the heroin camp workers)	
2	Alpa:	Damn! I thought the movie was bad.
3	Osiris:	To the man's credit, he's actually eased up on the retard throttle.
4		And now that's added a balance, and the audience can connect. I
5		mean, this is Theater 101, but, you know, he's had a tough road.
6		He'll become a naturalist.
7	Alpa:	Yeah.
8	Osiris:	Break down the aesthetic distance, then the...
9	(Alpha hits Osiris)	
10	Alpa:	Told you I'd tag you back.
11	Osiiris:	Can I tell you that I'm sorry for any offense I might've caused,
12		man? I just got caught up in...
13	Alpa:	In being a dumbass?
14	Osiris:	I guess so.
15	Alpa:	Why you still doing this Chicken George[19] shit, I have no idea.
16	Osiris:	Neither do I.
17	Alpa:	It's beyond me.
18	Osiris:	It's beyond me.

[18] *Simple Jack* was a film in which Ben Stiller's character, Tugg Speedman, attempted a serious role where he played a mentally handicapped man.

[19] Chicken George was a character in the book *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* written by Alex Haley. The story follows a man and his descendants through their struggle with slavery. The book was adapted into a television series in 1977.

19	Alpa:	You confused.
20	Osiris:	I am a little confused.
21	Alpa:	I know.
22	Osiris:	But are we cool?
23	Alpa:	Not really.

Although the fact that Downey Jr.'s performance and the critical praise of it suggests that there is still a type of acceptance and pleasure found in the characterization of racial stereotypes of Blacks, the critique and self-reflexive nature of blackface in the film "points both to the stereotype's ability to evacuate historical context, while at the same time, exposes the problematic of essentialism" (Greene 2009: 1). Toward the end of the film, Osiris removes his fake hair and contacts in order to reveal, not the face of the actor Lazarus, or the face of Downey Jr., but another white face with blond hair and blue eyes. This demonstrates that the blackface in this film is yet another instance of white males performing blackness while forming whiteness (Greene 2009; Bucholtz & Lopez 2011). In the end, the self-reflexive blackface in Tropic Thunder is "a use of the landscape of images to acknowledge shifts in our conceptualizations of race and racial identity, as well as questions the United States' lingering dependence upon race and racial performance" (Greene 2009: 5).

What the films in this chapter demonstrate is that although the updated modern blackface characters are just as inauthentic as the traditional blackface characters, they may be considered less offensive due to the fact that they are rarely the author or principal of the ethnically-marked linguistic features spoken in the film. Furthermore, the blackface characters are different from the characters in the following chapter in

linguistic and other semiotic ways. As will be established, the white linguistic representation of blackness by the characters that participate in linguistic crossing carries a symbolic meaning of either 'fronting' (inauthentic) or 'representing' (authenticated) while the representation by blackface characters discussed here reveals the ideologies and racial stereotypes of the supporting characters in the film.

Chapter 5: Authentication and Linguistic Crossing in Film

In this chapter, I describe the ways in which linguistic crossing representations may be read as authentic or inauthentic. It has been suggested that the best place to look for language ideology is in "the terms and presuppositions of metapragmatic discourse" (Silverstein 1979, as cited in Irvine 2001: 25). Focusing first on metapragmatic discourses of some of the characters who may be considered wiggers (see chapter 3), section 5.1 describes their ideologies about the constructions of identity and suggest that at times they depend on racial authenticity but at other times depended on racial performances that did not correspond with the speaker's race. Next, in section 5.2, I detail how each time a character uses language indexical of blackness, social goods (Gee 2011) or something of want or value are at stake because these characters are participating in practices within which they want to be accepted. As will be illustrated, in some cases the practices are acceptable and therefore the character gains a social good while in other cases the practices are challenged/mocked and therefore they lose a social good (Gee 2011). Summarily, this section demonstrates how characters bid for social goods. Finally, in section 5.3, I introduce the authenticating practices used by these characters, explaining how identity is "the product rather than the source of linguistic and other semiotic practices" (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 585). Taken together, the sections of this chapter suggest that white representations of African Americans are complexly positioned within ideologies of racial authenticity.

5.1 IDEOLOGIES OF AUTHENTICITY AND IDENTITY

Although language is central in films that critique the wigger[20] style, it is not the only focus. Included in the narratives are metapragmatic discourses about social hierarchies in relation to race and class and how they relate to authenticity and identity. In this section, I describe the ideologies of authenticity and identity that wiggers hold and demonstrate that white crossing representations of African Americans serve as ideological commentary on racial authenticity/legitimacy. Drawing primarily on metapragmatic discussions in two films that attempt to provide white kids' own perspectives on the wigger style, I consider what they have to say about hip hop, identity, cultural authenticity, and cross-racial interaction. Firstly, I call attention to the fact that performing blackness, hip hop, and gangster are ideologically associated. Secondly, I argue that the evaluative acts of the wigger characters suggest that performing this style is a performance of youth identity in addition to one of race. Because of this, there is an acknowledgement of its temporary status. These acts also suggest that identities are 'relationally constructed' (Bucholtz & Hall 2005) through aspects of similarity and differences. Lastly, I discuss the characters' awareness that identity is performed.

5.1.1 Ideologies of Identity

Both *Black and White* and *Havoc* provide viewers a glimpse into the lives of their characters through a scripted documentary style film where the wigger characters are presented as part of a documentary. All of the characters in the films are actors, but

[20] Refer to Chapter 3 section 3.3.2 for a discussion of the meanings of this label and how it is used in the present study.

framing these performances as if they were through the eyes of a documentarian suggests that the filmmakers want the viewing audience to interpret some aspect of reality in them. Both films attempt to explain why wiggers adopt the identity. The following dialogue taken from *Black and White* sums up the views about identity in the eyes of these characters. The wiggers in film "admire and look up to the black community, …and…rappers," because they consider it "wild" and unreasonable when compared to their own community.

Example 5.1: *Black and White*

1	Teacher:	Young people are always more given to admiring what is wild than
2		what is reasonable. That is a quote from Delacroix. I want to
3		examine today with you, the question of identity. And is culture
4		involved, and is race a factor? Charlie?
5	Charlie:	I want to be Black. I wanna get into the hip hop thing. I wanna
6		go there.
7	Teacher:	Raven.
8	Raven:	Times are definitely different now. Things are different. And
9		obviously now you see a lot of white kids, you know…that, that
10		admire and look up to the black community, and, and hip hop and,
11		you know, rappers.
12	Teacher:	Wren.
13	Wren:	I think if people are struggling with who they are…I mean that's a
14		big thing, and being a teenager…is the transition from being a kid
15		to being an adult. And when you are an adult, you have to kind of
16		know who you are.
17	Teacher:	Marty.
18	Marty:	What's not healthy about, you know, choosing a style? I mean,
19		you saying I should treasure my Russian heritage…and you know,
20		get all caught up in what's going on in Russia right now? I don't
21		give a fuck 'cause it's never gonna affect me.
22	Kim:	You don't wanna be what people expect of your race. You know,
23		like, people say, "You're White, you have to be this way. You
24		can't walk around and talk, whatever, Ebonics", you know. And
25		they're saying… I don't know. Sometimes you just don't want to
26		be what your race is supposed to be.

Charlie: I'm a little kid, you know. Little kids go through phases. I mean, I like it now and I'm gonna like stand up for it and be into hip-hop but you know when it comes down to it, I'll be over it soon. But for right now, while I'm in school, and while I've got comfort, and, I-I'm okay and all my friends are into it, I can go out and hang with them. I can go be a part of that. I can do whatever I want. I'm a kid in America.

The conversation above presents multiple facets of the performance of the wigger style. First of all, we have the ideological reduction of blackness to "a hip-hop thing" by Charlie. Most of the wiggers who 'act Black' are doing so because they are interested in hip hop culture and for some reason do not realize that you can participate in hip hop without behaving in the manner that they do (incorporating the language and clothing) and without wanting to "be Black". Second of all, they realize that they are choosing and performing a style (line 18), a style that is unexpected of them because of their race. What is presented as problematic in their discussion is the idea that they have to "be what your race is supposed to be" (line 26). Kim seems to suggest that speaking Ebonics equates to her not being what is expected of her (lines 22-26). While Marty implies that the reason for performing blackness and not claiming his Russian heritage has to do with the fact that a black identity has more to do with him than a Russian one (lines 19-21). However, what is ignored in this discussion is whether what goes on in the black community affects them. Because as they indicate, they still get to go home and to school where they have "comfort" (line 30).

Also, even as they talk about the fact that they should be able to use "Ebonics", none of the kids in this scene are actually using it or linguistic features of the wigger

style. A plausible reason for this is that they are in school and are taking part in an intellectual debate about identity. This fact seems to support Harper's (2008) argument that those who utilize features associated with black speech in film will switch to a more standard variety when speaking about something of intellectual value. Another reason may be that they do not know how to use it appropriately and therefore refrain from using it in a public setting where they can be critiqued. These reasons would suggest that they might be designing their speech in relation to their audience (Bell 2001). It also may be, as Allison in *Havoc* points out in Example 5.2, because identity is not static (line 3). Instead identities encompass, "temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles," (Bucholtz and Hall 2005: 585) that require different styles of speech.

Example 5.2 *Havoc*

1	Eric:	Have you noticed when you get serious, you stop talking all, you
2		know, street and dope and shit.
3	Allison:	I can be lots of people, I can be like you. (Moves to the other side
4		of the couch; hunches over, with hand over mouth, mocking
5		voice). Gee, Dr. McConnelly, your position on cultural ethics is
6		fascinating and really applies to the post-Clinton era in politics. I
7		ju-I just can't wait till I'm old enough to vote. (Drops act)

A final thing to note about the dialogue in Example 5.1 is that the students realize that this style is transitory and that they can pretend to be Black until they decide they do not want to any longer because as Charlie says, "I'm a kid in America" (line 33). However, the undertone is that she is a *white* kid in America. Because of this, she is able to perform this identity—one that may reproduce unfavorable stereotypes about Blacks—

with little consequence. In Hill's (2008) terms, the wiggers in this film are participating in a form of "covert racist discourse".

The idea that whites are regarded as privileged in these films is pointed out by a Latina in the class.

Example 5.3 *Black and White*

1	Teacher:	Sharon?
2	Sharon:	Well, first of all, not everyone in here is White. I'm from the
3		hood, and I don't live there anymore and I don't wanna go back
4		and live there. I go there sometimes to visit my friends and they're
5		trying to get out. They wanna go on to a college education. They
6		stay in school and get their grades so they can get out. And I have
7		friends that do wanna rap, and they rap about stuff so that they can
8		get out of the hood. We're tryin' to move up, y'all tryin' to go
9		down.

Sharon's comment expresses that it is easy for white kids to imitate hip hop or black culture, but that non-whites do not have the same luxury of imitating the life of the white kids. They have to work hard to "move up" (line 8) while it is easy for the white kids to "go down" (lines 8-9). Moreover, through her discussion, Sharon underscores an underlying class distinction that is rarely made by the characters. This is a possible reason why wiggers are constantly criticized within films. Their attitudes and language can be argued to be, to borrow Jane Hill's (2008) phrase, a key component of the "everyday language of white racism."

The movie *Havoc*, a drama, featuring upper-middle-class white teenagers in Los Angeles who embrace what is perceived as black culture, despite the fact that there are no African Americans in the film, shares many of the same sentiments of *Black and White*.

When the documentarian character in this film asks the wigger characters why they adopt this style, it results in the following discussion in which the characters ideologically associate performing blackness with performing gangster, describe why they think black culture is different from white culture, and similarly to the characters in *Black and White* suggest that performing blackness is really performing a youth identity.

Example 5.4 *Havoc*

1	Allison:	So we dress gangsta, we talk shit, so what? (laughs). See
2		basically, the thing to remember is that none of it really matters.
3		We're just teenagers and we're bored. We are totally… fuckin'…
4		bored. (laughs)
5	Eric:	How long have you identified with, uh, gangsta culture?
6	Toby:	I mean, I hate fuckin' rich ass white culture. That shit's fuckin'
7		wack. You know?
8	Eric:	So are you guys just wiggers trying to borrow from the Blacks?
9	Sam:	Nah…The whole world sucks, son. Like all the good shit came
10		from black people.
11	Eric:	You like anything white?
12	Sam:	Yeah, I like my skinny white ass, playa. (laughs)

This discussion is not as revealing as the one in *Black and White*, in fact, the subjects of the documentary do not really answer the questions asked by the documentarian character. Instead of being a 'hip hop thing', blackness to these characters means being part of 'gangsta culture' (lines 1 and 5). The characters in this film agree with the ones in *Black and White* that the reason that the characters adopt the wigger style is because they find white culture boring and black culture exciting. They also explicitly state that it is okay to adopt this style because they are young and because "none of it really matters" (line 2). The characterization of whiteness as 'boring' parallels what Bucholtz has found

in her study of white kids in high school (Bucholtz 2011a) while Rampton (2005) has stated that crossing is a phenomenon that occurs during adolescence. Therefore the participants in these films seem to have accurately captured these aspects of the everyday performances of this identity.

Both of these films try to avoid preaching in terms of whether or not a person should or should not adopt the style. However, all of the discussions seem superficial. This may come from the fact that none of the characters are actually engaging in the culture that they are discussing. They are imitating it (see section 5.3 for further discussion of this authenticating practice). There is no in depth discussion about what the kids get from assuming the identity. It only indicates that they can. When asked if they are "just wiggers", the answer is "no" with no real explanation. When asked why they behave the way they do, the subject is changed (see Example 5.5) or the answer is vague (see Example 5.6). This could suggest that the characters are aware of problems of perceived authenticity; and therefore are not completely comfortable answering the questions. However, as Eric states (5.5), we are trying to get to know the wigger character and understand why they participate in these social practices, but in these films, we never do.

Example 5.5 *Havoc*

1	Eric:	Allison, do you want to be a different person?
2	Allison:	Do you want to make love to me?
3	Eric:	No, seriously though. Isn't this what all the clothes and the talk,
4		you know? Isn't that what it's all about?
5	Allison:	No seriously. (Begins to take off shirt). Do you want to fuck me?

6	Eric:	I'm just trying to get to know you here and you're acting like a
7		porn star.

Example 5.6 *Black and White*

1	Sam:	Alright, I wanna—tell me what the crew can offer you. What is it.
2		What is it that they offer you? What do they offer you? Why do
3		you—why do you want to be involved in it? Why do you want to
4		emulate that?
5	Charlie:	It's like safety.
6	Marty:	Because they're cool.
7	Sam:	Safety from what?
8	Charlie:	Safety from…from like anyone who wants to fuck with us.

In these examples, the documentarian characters Eric and Sam, who are also White, ask their subjects their reasons for performing the wigger identity. The characters' answers rest on creating an ideological link between their performances of blackness and stereotypes of black people─particularly with hypersexuality and hyperaggression. I state that because Allison gets sexually aggressive and Charlie talks about getting physically aggressive, both females believe that the social good gained from these performances is the ability to be aggressive (see Chapter 6 for further discussion on the topic of aggression). Furthermore, both are constructing a particular form of femininity ascribed to black females. There is a belief that black women are more sexually available and aggressive than females of other colors. Charlie and Allison seem to be drawing from these stereotypes when constructing their feminine identity.

5.1.2 Ideologies of Authenticity

As discussed in chapter 2, concepts of authenticity are complex and have had a complicated history in the sociolinguistic literature. This section focuses on authenticity

as it is relevant to crossing and there are three types that are of particular relevance. The first type has to do with being members of a particular social group, usually defined by race (discussed in section 5.2). The second one has to do with the types of practices (both linguistic and non-linguistic) in which a speaker engages in order to authenticate himself (discussed in section 5.3). The last type of authenticity, the one discussed in the present section has to do with the use (in particular, who has the right to use) and application of certain racial terms. Chun (2011) uses the term "reading race" in order to discuss the explicit assignment of racialized meaning to a moment of talk. I borrow this term to discuss the uses of the word *nigga* as well as derogatory slurs for white people discussed in this section because they are moments of reading race. However, the discussion below also focuses on who has the right to assign these terms, an issue that is not a necessary component to the meaning of reading race.

5.1.2.1 Reading Race

Since *nigger* or specifically its phonological variant *nigga* is utilized a great deal in hip hop music, it becomes a site for the battle of authenticity for the wigger character. The present discussion implies that the term has been reoriented from being a fixed racial reference term to an "intersubjectively negotiated identity category" (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 595). Although possibly misguided, these characters through the process of denaturalization (Bucholtz & Hall 2005) are trying to undermine essentialized assumptions about what it means to 'belong' to a particular racial group. In the following example, taken from the movie *Black and White*, a distinction is made between the rhotic

and non-rhotic pronunciation of the term (*Nigger is a derogatory term. Niggas isn't*.). However, Charlie's argument for the non-rhotic pronunciation does not take into account the different pronunciations of the term that has also been historically used derogatorily by European Americans as well. Specifically, the fact that Whites used the pronunciation *niggra* believing that because they pronounced it this way that they too were not participating in the racism behind this term (*The N-Word* 2004).

Example 5.7 *Black and White*

1	Charlie:	Yo, what? So you wanna know why we call ourselves niggas?
2	Sam:	So you actually use that term, niggers? Isn't that a derogatory
3		term?
4	Group:	Niggas!!
5	Charlie:	Nigger is a derogatory term. Niggas isn't. Niggas is like, "Yo,
6		these are my niggas."
7	Sam:	Alright, this is something that people don't—This is exactly what I
8		am talking about.
9	Marty:	We should introduce her to Will.
10	Wren:	Yeah! Will! You gotta meet Will, his brother. He's the true
11		nigga.

This conversation metapragmatically associates the word with solidarity (lines 5-6) and indexes authenticity (lines 10-11). However, it does not seem to be indexical of racial authenticity since Will who is the 'true nigga' is not Black, but White. In other words, although Sam (the documentarian character) seems to be surprised that they used the term, because use of it did not match their perceived racial identity, the characters' reading of race depends on engagement in social practices. This includes spending time and working with black people. Nevertheless, their discussion does not really answer the question of why they actually use it. There are plenty of other words they could choose

from in order to convey solidarity, but they choose the controversial one perhaps to demonstrate that the can or should be able to do so.

In the next example from *Bamboozled*, Thomas Dunwitty, a wigger who is the senior vice president of a television station, uses *nigga* repeatedly in order to both assert power over the black writer Delacroix and to align himself with the black community (*I grew up around black people my whole life…I probably know niggas better than you*). He later rationalizes the use of the term by stating that he has a black wife and biracial kids.

Example 5.8 *Bamboozled*

1	Dunwitty:	You know, I grew up around black people my whole life. I mean
2		if the truth be told, I probably know niggas better than you.
3	(Delacroix uncomfortably shifts in his seat).	
4		And don't go getting offended by my use of the quote/unquote N-
5		word. I have a black wife and two bi-racial kids. So I feel I have a
6		right. I don't give a god damn what Spike Lee says. Tarantino is
7		right. Nigga is just a word. If Ole Dirty Bastard can use it every
8		other word, why can't I?
9	Delacroix:	Well, I would prefer if you did not use that word in my presence.
10	Dunwitty:	Oh, really? Nigger, nigga, nigga, nigga.

Because Dunwitty is Delacroix's boss, Delacroix is powerless to do anything about the fact that Dunwitty insists on using *nigga* in his presence. Delacroix's frustration is shown through a quick peak inside of his head where he slaps his boss repeatedly while calling him *whitey*. From the excerpt alone, it is unclear whether or not the viewing audience is supposed to align with Dunwitty and accept his explanation that he is a ratified member of the black community because he has grown up with African

Americans and has a black wife. However, it can be argued that his behavior appears to betray him as culturally inauthentic. Whites who have grown up around Blacks their whole life would be less likely to call their black employee *nigga*. They would understand that the use of that word is situational and that not every black person likes it to be applied to them. Furthermore, they would understand why Ole Dirty Bastard, an African American rapper, would be able to use it in situations where he could not. Furthermore, the fact that Delacroix does have an issue with Dunwitty's use of the word *nigga* possibly suggests that the contrast between Dunwitty's claims and his actions is at least supposed to make the viewing audience critical of his explanation.

In cases where the use of the word can be challenged, it is. This is demonstrated in the final example from the movie *Go!* (1999) where an African American character Marcus, played by Taye Diggs, contests the use of the term by Tiny, played by Breckin Meyer, who applies the term to himself in order to authenticate his black identity.

Example 5.9 *Go!*

1	Tiny:	Yo man, why don't you give a nigga a break?
2	Marcus:	Nigga? What nigga? This nigga?
3	Tiny:	Yo, man, I told you, my mother's mother's mother was black.
4	Marcus:	Your mother's mother's mother fa- This ain't "Roots", mother-.
5		Now I want to see a picture of this Nubian princess, okay?
6		Pictures.
7	Tiny:	I don't carry pictures of my mother's mother's mother in my
8		wallet!
9	Marcus:	If you were any less black you would be clear.
10	Tiny:	That bitch was black as night. Yo, man, I see black. 'Cause I
11		know I am. See, color's a state of mind, Marcus.
12	Marcus:	You know what, you're right. Thank you, Rhythm Nation.
13	Tiny:	Well, fuck you, Vanilla Ice.

Unlike, the claims to authenticity discussed in *Black and White* where Will's brother is considered a 'true *nigga*' because he has immersed himself in a black community and in *Bamboozled* where Dunwitty knows black people better than blacks because of his wife and kids, Tiny first justifies his use of *nigga* by claiming racial authenticity by suggesting to have a distant black relative (line 3) and using racialized language (line 10). He later makes a psychological justification by indicating that race is not based on skin color but a mindset (line 11). Through the process of *authorization* (Bucholtz and Hall 2005), Marcus conflates his own identity with the word (line 2) and thereby dismisses Tiny's first claim by calling attention to his own racial authenticity. The focus on Marcus' race continues by building on shared knowledge with a reference to the movie *Roots*[21]. Additionally, he mocks Tiny's psychological argument by calling him *Rhythm Nation* (line 12)—a reference to a Janet Jackson song about racial unity. Tiny's only comeback is to question Marcus' identity as culturally black by aligning him with a white performer considered to be a wannabe rapper (line 13). This race reading appears to be the film's effort to make Tiny's argument even lamer because he seems to think that the only way to perform blackness is through stereotypical displays in which Marcus does not engage.

While being able to use the word *nigga* ideologically associates the wigger character with authenticity (at least in the mind of the speaker), race readings by these characters that use derogatory terms usually applied to Whites ideologically allows the wigger characters to disaffiliate with whiteness (Bucholtz 2011b). The fact that wiggers

[21] *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* was written by Alex Haley. The story follows a man and his descendants through their struggle with slavery. The book was adapted into a television series in 1977

disavow white culture and embrace blackness was demonstrated in Example 4.4 when Toby stated that he hated "fuckin' rich ass white culture" and claimed that it was, "fuckin' wack". The use of terms like *whitey* and *cracker* further illustrate this (Bucholtz 2011b). Example 5.10, from *The Bros.* features wiggers Lanny and Pete encountering two other white male characters in another car at a red light one who is driving and another who is in the passenger seat:

Example 5.10 *The Bros*.

1	Lanny:	(To Pete) Know what your problem is?
2	Driver:	[Laughs] Check this shit out.
3	Lanny:	You need to get high.
4	Passenger:	What a fucking turd.
5	Pete:	What's up cracker? You want to step?
6	Driver:	Speak English. I don't know Ebonics.
7	Pete:	Motherfucker, you better recognize before I rearrange that skin ass
8		head of yours, bitch.
9	Driver:	[Gets out of the car] I'm gonna knock the white back into you.

In this example, it is the speech of Lanny and Pete that bothers the driver and the passenger. When he first sees Lanny and Pete in the car next to theirs, he greets him with a head nod. It is only after he hears the way that Lanny speaks that he laughs and brings Lanny and Pete to the attention of his passenger (*Check this shit out.*). Pete's response to the passengers insult is to challenge him to a fight *"you want to step?"* These variables immediately cause the two men to criticize Lanny and Pete and Lanny's use of *cracker* and reference to *skin heads* only exacerbate the situation. These readings of race serve to distance his identity from that of the passengers of the other vehicle while other features

(use of falsetto-discussed in chapter 6, clothing, music) associates him with blackness. However, the fact that the driver wants to *'knock the white'* back into Lanny highlights the fact the characters are perceived as participating in racial performances that do not correlate with their racial identity.

At times these types of terms are also applied to Blacks that challenge the wigger characters' performance of the wigger style. In Example 5.11 taken from the 2005 comedy *Waiting…*, the two wigger characters Nick and T Dog are busboys at the restaurant upon which the movie is centered. Bishop is the black cook.

Example 5.11 *Waiting…*

1	Bishop:	Nick. T Dog. You guys are so one-dimensional.
2		(Nick and T Dog look at each other)
3	T Dog:	Oh, fuck you <u>whitey</u>.

This use of the word *whitey* seems to be used to imply that the two wigger characters believe they are more authentically Black than Bishop. They are aligning him with someone who oppresses and themselves with the oppressed. They feel that they are being oppressed by Bishop's inability to see why they perform the wigger identity. The uses of *nigga* and white racial slurs in this section represent both the wigger characters' unconscious violation of racial boundaries and the fact that these characters are "just as willfully blind to others' race as they are to their own" (Bucholtz 2011b: 262).

5.2 IDEOLOGICAL AND INTERACTIONAL CONTEXTS

Before commenting on the authenticating practices of these characters, it is important to discuss the possible interpretations that can come from their performances. The performances can either be interpreted by the other characters in the film (and by the viewing audience) as accommodating (Giles and Powesland 1975) or as mocking. Whether a particular performance is interpreted as accommodating or mocking depends on the specific context (Chun 2007) in which speech read as black is embedded within the film. By context, I refer to the linguistic and social frame in which the speech and its speakers are placed. Particularly, I focus on two central types of contexts—one *ideological* and another *interactional* (Chun 2007). The ideological context classifies a speaker as an ingroup or outgroup member of a social group and determines if a variety is considered high or low in prestige. If the language of Blacks in the film is framed as low in prestige and outgroup members use features of it then the wigger style is more likely to be interpreted as mocking. This practice of mocking can be compared to "mock language" established by Hill (1993, 1999, 2003) in her discussions of Mock Spanish. When the language of Blacks in the film is low in prestige, the use of white linguistic representations of African Americans is arguably used to demonstrate linguistic hierarchical differences between the standard and nonstandard languages in the film (Ronkin & Harn 1999) as well as social differences between the character who is crossing and the group he or she is crossing into. For example, none of the black characters in *Bringing Down the House* (*BDH*) and *Bulworth* have examples of Blacks whose primary dialect is Standard English (SE) and when the black female leads in the films do use

speech associated with SE, it is marked and comes as a shock to the white male leads to whom the speech is delivered.

In *BDH*, Steve Martin's character Peter Sanderson has the power to determine how the use of black speech is perceived through his criticisms of the variety used by Queen Latifah's character Charlene (Lopez 2009). Specifically, there are a series of metalinguistic exchanges such as the one found in (5.12) where it is clear that he is critical of her speech and believes it is preventing her from being successful (Lopez 2009):

Example 5.12 *Bringing Down the House*

1	Charlene:	Oh, look at the legs on this wine. I'm telling you, this place is
2		banging.
3	Peter:	Don't you just mean this is a nice place?
4	Charlene:	Why the word "banging" make you so uptight?
5	Peter:	You know something? You're smart. If you'd just deign to speak
6		English, with what you've learned on the Internet, and in prison,
7		you could be a paralegal tomorrow.

However, when he feels that the dialect may gain him a social good, he has no problem appropriating it.

Example 5.13 *Bringing Down the House*

1	Peter:	Say <u>yo</u>, you got a <u>bafroom</u> in there?

Example 5.13 is the first line spoken by Peter when trying to get into a hip hop club frequented by Widow, the man who framed Charlene for burglary. It includes both

lexical (yo) and phonological (th-fronting and falsetto) features that Whites include when indexing blackness[22].

Although Warren Beatty's character Senator Bulworth is not as disapproving of the dialect, like Sanderson, he is able to be the voice of the black people within the film (Lopez 2009). "By rapping throughout the film (see example 5.14), he is able to take an aspect of black culture—one that some consider to be used as a voice for a particular group within the black community (Rose 1994; Perry 2004; Kitwana 2006; Alim 2006)—and speak on their behalf (as well as others) without ever consulting them" (Lopez 2009: 113).

Example 5.14 *Bulworth*

1	Bulworth:	We got millions of brothas in prison/I mean the walls are really
2		rockin'./ But you can bet your ass they'd all be out if they could
3		afford Johnny Cochran.

In section 5.3.3, I discuss how the white linguistic representations of African Americans in these two films are used in order claim a sense of 'coolness' for these characters. However, "beyond these uses, the characters demonstrate white privilege (Hill 2008) because they are able to utilize the dialect without being affected by the stigmatizations that usually go along with using it" (Lopez 2009: 113). Once they have no further need to claim an association with blackness they are able to return to their suburban lifestyle and standard language variety with a newfound sense of 'hipness' (a social good) from their experience (Lopez 2009). While it is possible that including such

[22] See chapter 6 for an analysis of these features.

exchanges as those between Peter and Charlene alongside Peter's performances of stereotypical blackness is intentional in order to encourage viewers to take a critical stance toward these types of performances, this use of ethnically marked speech by outgroup members is one reason why it can be considered a form of mock language.

In addition to the ideological context, the interactional context (Chun 2007) also plays a part in the interpretation of white linguistic representations of African Americans. The interactional context distinguishes between meanings that are immediately emergent as opposed to those that are widely circulating. If the intention of the speaker is to mock, then the voicing of the character is varidirectionally (Bakhtin 1984) and presented as not belonging to the speaker. If the purpose is not to mock, then the variety will be unidirectionally voiced (Bakhtin 1984) as belonging to the speaker—at least in the situation in which it is used. In acts of mocking, the mocker's voice enters a dialogic relationship (Bakhtin 1981, 1984) with the voice it mocks. At the moment of mocking, the voice is structurally similar yet distinct and superior (Chun 2009). No matter what the intention of the speaker is, there is the possibility that voicings are read as mocked speech. This suggests that the interactional contexts demonstrate collaborative outcomes of the interactional moments rather than the intention of the speaker.

Mocked language is at times used to criticize the wigger style. In example 5.15 from *Waiting…,* the two wigger characters Nick and T Dog have become frustrated by the fact that Monty refuses to call them by their nicknames. Realizing this, Monty pretends to redress the situation by varidirectionally-voicing a wigger character through his use of Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL; Alim 2006).

Example 5.15 *Waiting…*

1	Monty:	Aw…Come on, now, dog. You know I'm just fucking with you.
2		You know I give you the mad, phat, superfly, stupid-dope, dumb-
3		ass, retarded, bomb-shit props.

The intertextual gap (Briggs & Bauman 1992) between the wigger voice and Monty's own voice can be seen in his performance of hesitation in producing the slang terms, as well as the listing style of semantically similar terms (mad, phat, dope, bomb) combined with semantically dissimilar ones (dumb-ass, shit) (Bucholtz 2007). The fact that the performance is interpreted as mock and not accommodating is evident by Nick's gestural act of slyly giving Monty the finger. Therefore, this is a clear instance of mock white linguistic representations of African Americans, which represents a third stylistic indexical order (Silverstein 2003): a stylization of a stylization (Bucholtz 2007).

Sometimes accommodating language can be interpreted as mocked language. In the movie *Gran Torino*, a wigger character is walking with an Asian female friend when they encounter a group of African American males. In addressing them, he decides to use speech that he feels is more like theirs. This decision leads to him losing a social good because he is accosted and pushed against a fence.

Example 5.16 *Gran Torino*

1	Black male 1:	Come here girl. Don't be shy. Damn, you can't say hi?
2		Why you actin' all stuck up and shit?
3	Black male 2:	Hmmm, hm. <u>What you suppose to be, man?</u>
4	White male:	Naw, it's cool dawg.
5	Black male 1:	What?
6	Black male 2:	<u>What the fuck you doin' in my neighborhood, boy?</u>
7	White male:	Nothin'. Just goin' down to the corner spot, you know, get
8		some CD's. It's all good, bro.

9	Black male 1:	He just called you bro, (unintelligible).
10	White male:	Come on, it's all good bro.
11	Black male 2:	It's all good, huh?
12	Black male 1:	Man, shut the fuck up!
13	Black male 2:	Call me bro again, and I'll bite yo' muthafuckin' face off.
14	Black male 1:	Yeah, muthafucker.
15	Black male 2:	Now what the fuck you come down here for, huh? You
16		here to bring me this little present. You bringing it to us?
17	Black male 1:	Oriental yummy. Oh, don't worry. I'm going to take real
18		good care of her. Get the fuck out of here.
19	Black male 3:	Get the fuck out of here, man.

It is obvious that the only intent of the white character in this film is to eliminate social distance between him and the African American males; yet, he is still challenged even before he speaks (line 3) and is continuously challenged throughout the entire exchange (see underlined dialogue). Therefore, not all types of accommodation are considered favorable. What is preferred is the type of accommodating that occurs through immersion (see 4.4). In other words, a speaker is truly considered accommodating only once they become an ingroup member. Despite the preference, there are a couple of cases when nerdy white males who are outgroup members are able to transcend their nerdiness through the use of HHNL with a black character in the film (see 5.17 & 5.18). In these instances, their 'hypernerdiness' (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011) is what prevents their language from being considered mocked language.

Example 5.17 *Bringing Down the House*

1	Howie:	I'd like to dip you in Cheez Whiz and spread you over a Ritz
2		cracker, if I'm not being too subtle.
3	Charlene:	Boy, you are some kind of freaky.
4	Howie:	Oh, you have no idea. You got me straight tripping, boo.

Example 5.18 *Underclassman*

1	Alexander:	You got some angry skills there dog.
2	Tre:	(laughs) I think you mean mad skills.
3	Alexander:	Mad skills. Is that how they say it in the concrete jungle? You
4		hail from the hood, huh? The LBC? Southern central? City of
5		Compton?
6	Tre:	Yo, you really wildin' (right now?).
7	Alexander:	Thank you, I think. Hey I'm Alexander by the way.

In the above examples, Howie is using linguistic features that he believes will help him get closer to Charlene and possibly gain sexual favors from her while Alexander uses similar types of features in order to become friends with the new kid in school. In other words, both of them are trying to gain a social good. Each case is a sincere attempt at accommodation. Furthermore, it is only a linguistic accommodation. They are not constructing what could be construed as a wigger identity because they do not utilize any of the other semiotic features. This and the fact that each representation of black speech is possibly considered flattering to the listener are most likely what leads the listener to interpret it as accommodating.

In summary, if a character is part of a social group that contains authentic representations of black language speakers, then he is usually considered a cultural and linguistic insider and his use of language is not questioned. Moreover, his speech is interpreted as accommodating. If his speech diverges from those within his social group, or his group of friends does not contain any legitimated speakers of black speech, he is considered to be "fronting" or not performing his true identity by those inside and outside of his social group. This type of linguistic performance can be interpreted as mocking and those that participate in this social practice are likely to be labeled a wigger.

Therefore, social membership is also a determinate in whether or not a character's authenticating practices are successful.

5.3 AUTHENTICATING PRACTICES

By analyzing the linguistic and other social practices of these characters, the rest of this chapter describes their authenticating practices in order to comment on the co-construction of black and white authenticity by filmmakers (i.e. director, script writer, and actor). Particularly, it focuses on how these films define who is authentically or inauthentically black and how they evaluate the "inauthentic" performance of characters considered to be wiggers. This leads us to the final type of authenticity that is relevant to these characters, which has to do with the type of practices in which they engage. By practices I mean the types of activities in which the wigger characters are allowed to participate in order to authenticate themselves. Bucholtz (2003) argues that authenticity should not be considered a state, but an outcome and therefore a process. Mickey Hess (2005) in his discussion of the authenticating practices of white hip hop artists (who some consider wiggers) specifies three strategies in which they engage: immersion, imitation, and inversion. Immersion strategies include not only interacting with and being accepted by other black artists but also not calling attention to their whiteness by not appropriating black vocal styles. Those that try to mimic these vocal styles are considered to be using imitation strategies. Other imitation strategies include the adoption of a rags-to-riches story by claiming an urban upbringing and things that can come along with that type of upbringing such as involvement in crime, drugs, and gang life. The last authenticating

practice, inversion, "inverts the narratives of black artists to show whiteness hindering…acceptance as a rapper," (381).

Although there are exceptions, common discourses in film characterize the wigger character with feelings of inadequacy due to a lack of white male masculinity and sexuality (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011). The wigger then overcompensates for these feelings by participating in similar authenticating practices such as those considered in Hess (2005) and Lopez (2009), specifically imitation. Some of the characters also participate in de-authenticating (Coupland 2001) practices. The wigger character imitates the imagined image of the hypermasculine and hypersexual black male (Bucholtz 2011b; Bucholtz & Lopez 2011) found in hip hop music videos and films. This imitation includes semiotic resources such as clothing, associations with crime/violence (i.e. guns, drugs), dancing, and language. However, it does not necessarily include true involvement in any of these things. That is to say, it can be argued that the characters are imitating what they believe a hip hop lifestyle would be like without actually knowing what it actually is. These characters focus on salient features found in HHNL while ignoring those found in other black varieties (e.g. those used by middle-class blacks). However, there are some characters that can be found to participate in immersion strategies. In these cases the character is usually not problematized in the film. From their first scene until their last scene in a film they participate in the urban cultural life presented in the world of that film. The uses of language by these characters present them as engaging in the 'shared local identity' of the community (Bucholtz 2003). De-authenticating strategies occur when the character is too old (usually baby boomers) to be

adopting the wigger identity. In these cases, the character's performance of the wigger identity is extreme, intentionally exaggerated, and comes off as if the characters are playing "dress up". Despite the differences there is also overlap between the groups because although they may frame them differently, they all draw on similar representations of black language and culture.

5.3.1 Imitation Strategies

Imitation strategies usually occur in films where the wigger characters do not have any associations with 'authentic' speakers of the film's version of black speech. Expressly, in these cases the wigger is either part of a social group where he is the only one using features of the wigger style or he is a part of a group of wiggers. The goal of imitation strategies is to represent the wigger identity as linguistically and culturally inauthentic (Bucholtz 2011b; Bucholtz & Lopez 2011). The characters are ridiculed and serve as comic relief thereby illustrating that in the world of film there is a strong disapproval of characters that claim an illegitimate affiliation with blackness (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011). This at times is demonstrated through indirect criticism, as in horror films where the wigger characters are slaughtered. An example of this can be found in *Drive-Thru* which is a movie about a killer clown called "Horny" who kills his victims at a drive-thru.

Example 5.19 *Drive-Thru*

1	Tony:	Yo, breezeside. Where we goin', playa?
2	Driver:	Motherfucking, Hellaburger, yo. Gonna get a double chili cheese
3		all up in here, nigga.

4	VG[23] 1:	Hmmm. Oh my God. It's like double chili cheese.
5	VG 2:	Yeah.
6	Tony:	Yo, check this shit out, yo. Hey, yo. (Throws a beer at a sign).
7		Yeah.
8	VG 1:	Shit.
9	Driver:	Fuckin' hole in one, dawg.
10	Tony:	That's how I roll.
11	Driver:	Yeah!
12	Tony:	That's how I roll.

In the above scene (which is how the movie opens) Tony and his friends are driving to a fast food restaurant called Hellaburger. They are set up as wiggers through the use of their language, hip hop music and clothing, marijuana, corn rows[24], and 40 ounce beers. Once the characters arrive to the drive-thru of Hellaburger they behave moronically by playing on stereotypes of masculinity. For example, they enter the restaurant although it is obvious that it is closed and the fact that someone is speaking through the clown face at the drive-thru is suspect. Adding to the machismo is the use of guns and strong, exaggerated language used while they are in the restaurant (5.21). Each is killed early on in the film—one by having his face fried in a deep fryer and the other cut into pieces.

Example 5.21 *Drive-Thru*

1	Tony:	Clown boy. It's yo' last chance, yo. Dumb-ass cracker. (Cocks
2		gun. Walks with a gangsta lean[25]. Opens walk-in freezer. Scared
3		by rat.) Whoa, I'll never eat this shit again. (Closes freezer door
4		only to see Horny standing in front of him.)
5	Horny:	Order up punk! (Throws him across the room). Employee of the
6		month is about to fuck you up!

[23] VG = Valley Girl.

[24] A hairstyle that consists of multiple braids braided very close to the scalp.

[25] During this walk, the walker has a limp while moving the upper body side to side.

The following example, demonstrates that wigger characters in dramas are often horribly treated as well (Bucholtz 2011b).

Example 5.22 *Havoc*

1	Toby:	Yo, dawg. This bag's fuckin' light.
2	Hector:	You better back the fuck up and get back in yo' car before you get
3		beat down, putho.
4	Toby:	Look. Just give me my fuckin' money back, alright. And you can
5		get yo' fuckin' bag back and we're out of here. Alright? Here's
6		your fuckin' bag. And take this sh- (Hector pulls a gun out)
7	Allison:	Toby!
8	Hector:	(With gun to Toby's groin) Now give me your fuckin' money.
9		(looks at Allison and friend as they get out of the car, points gun
10		at them) What?
11	Emily:	No!
12	Toby:	She didn't fuckin' do anything. Take the fuckin' money, man.
13		Alright? And get the fuck out of here. It's my bad.
14	Hector:	Shit, shit. What the fuck?
15	Allison:	Toby!
16	Hector:	(Cocks the gun at and points at Toby's head) Speaking Spanish.
17		Tu pinche vida. Chinga tu vida. You don't how fuckin'
18		(Unintelligible)
19	Toby:	(On his knees wetting himself with the gun pointed at his head).
20		Fuck, come on man. Stop, don't.
21	Allison:	Stop, please! Please?
22	Hector:	You fuck this little fuck right here? Huh? Does he pee all over
23		himself like that when he's with you? Huh? Does he shit on
24		himself, you wipe his ass for him? Huh? The fuck is wrong wit
25		you? (While slapping Toby on the head with his wallet) Don't you
26		ever come the fuck around here again, bitch. (slaps him in the
27		head again)

In the above scene, a gun is held to Toby's head after trying to buy drugs in East Los Angeles—a part of town with a large Mexican population. This scene illustrates characters who are engaging in imitation practices and who believe that just because they use particular linguistic features and listen to hip hop, that they can go to a neighborhood

where they do not come from and fit in. It is as if they believe that the language use and clothing in some way camouflages their skin. It also appears to give them courage. Later on in the film, a female wigger character is raped after hanging out in the same neighborhood that Toby is beaten up. These scenes demonstrate that the film industry is critical of the wigger who participates in imitation strategies. Their sentiments are shared by viewing audiences as well.

The opening scene for *Drive-thru* can be found on YouTube. Remarks about the wigger characters in this scene can also be found and they are not kind. For example, halloweenfan92 states, "…fucking wiggers…the way the wiggers get killed is being to fucking easy on them!" while heelsfantim exclaims, "this was the best part—watching these little wigger gang sucking wannabes get MURDERED!! Even though it is just a movie it proves there is no place in society for trash like this!!! MAY ALL GANG BANGER WANNA BE/PUNK/WIGGERS DIE!!!![26]". Whether the film industry reflects or instigates the hatred of wiggers is not something on which I can comment.

Direct criticisms of the wigger characters usually occur by other characters within the film—both Black and White. In these instances, it is the use of the language by the wigger characters' that is considered inauthentic. While it is true that non-wigger characters in these films criticize all aspects of the wigger identity, including their clothes and rapping skills, it is the linguistic performances of these characters that are "represented as pivotal to his transformation from inauthentically black to authentically

[26] Comments from youtube are quoted as they appear on the site. No grammatical or other changes have been made.

white" (Bucholtz 2011: 262). In chapter 6, I discuss the use of particular linguistic features by the characters that use imitation strategies and consider how it contributes to their perceived inauthenticity.

5.3.2 Immersion strategies

When white characters are a part of the social environment within the film's version of legitimate uses of black speech, they usually involve authenticated forms of language use as part of a nonracialized youth style, in which characters use a linguistic style that is similar to other characters with whom they interact. In these contexts, such performances are typically not stylized and may not be highly racialized as 'Black' within the film (Bucholtz 2007). Additionally, the use of black speech has a high level of prestige. Chun (2007) states that when an outgroup speaker adopts a style with prestige and frames it as his or her own, it is a form of emulation. Although the speech style can still be considered ideologically inauthentic, at the level of interaction it is considered "both positive in value and authentic to the speaker" (Chun, 2007: 278). This type of accommodation is upward instead of downward and is therefore different from accommodation where the use of black language is considered low in prestige (Lopez 2009). When the dialect to which the speaker is accommodating is considered low in prestige, downward convergent adoption occurs. In these cases, accommodating can be considered condescension instead of emulation (Chun 2007). Because the performances of the characters in the current set of films can be regarded as upward convergent practices I claim that their language is not interpreted as mock language, but instead

represent natural occurrences of an 'ethnically-marked dialect' (Sweetland 2002). The language of these characters can be argued to be influenced by black characters they interact with within the film, but there is also influence that comes from the actors' real lives (Lopez 2009). Additionally, I place these characters in this group because "the embodied semiotics in these movies are not used as tools in the characters' language crossing" (Lopez 2009: 116). For example, unlike the characters in the following section, the characters in this section do not transform from 'uncool' to 'cool' by changing their clothing, speech, and places where they gather socially (Lopez 2009). Furthermore, because they consistently use the same linguistic code throughout the movie and not just for specific purposes or events, the characters do not seem to be just imitating the linguistic features that are around them. Instead they are using linguistic features that they (and other characters in the film) consider their own (Lopez 2009).

Similarly to *Bringing Down the House* and *Bulworth* (see following section), *Black and White* and *Underclassman* have nightclub scenes. However, they are not used to set up crossing practices or to introduce the character to the films' urban life. Instead they are used to emphasize youth activity. In fact, unlike the club scenes in the following section, these club scenes include both white and black people (Lopez 2009). For instance, the scenes in *Black and White* where Will, the ratified speaker, uses ethnically-marked linguistic features, "it has already been established that he has friendships with urban African Americans and spends much time in their neighborhood" (Lopez 2009: 116). His speech is considered authentic by his younger brother and his brother's friends (see Example 5.7) and is not questioned by his African American affiliates. Moreover,

the stylized features do not index stereotypical ideologies about Blacks, but instead indexes his association with the black community (Lopez 2009). Finally, unlike the characters that adopt falsetto phonation, he does not adopt an affected or 'black' accent[27]. Instead, the pitch and prosody of his voice reflects the actor's real life New York upbringing.

Example 5.23 *Black and White*

Rich: Where the fuck you been at white boy? I've been lookin' for your little ass. What's going on man?
Will: Come on man, watch the 'do.
Rich: Come on. Your 'do is fucked up anyway, man. Stop this bullshit.
Will: What's up, yo? What you think of the digs, yo?
Rich: Shit is right.
Will: It's right, right?
Rich: What's up with you, though? What's going down?
Will: Nothing, chillin'. I'm feelin' this vibe.
Rich: Feelin' it? You feelin' it?
Will: Yeah.

This characterization can also be used to describe Edward Murdock in *Underclassman*. This character played by Vishiss, a Detroit rapper, is an upper-middle class white student who was kicked out of an elite private school where the majority of the movie takes place. His crossing scenes occur during a basketball game (5.24) and at the beach. Each of the settings "index youth/male culture and not black culture" (Lopez 2009: 117). Similarly to Will, Ed does not take on a contrived accent. Instead, the prosodic features reflected in the character's voice comes from Vishiss' Detroit working-

[27] See Chapter 6 for discussion of how prosodic features contribute to an inauthentic identity.

class background (Lopez 2009). I argue that this allows his speech to sound 'natural' and not stylized like other wigger characters.

Example 5.24 *Underclassman*

1	a.	Ed:	Come on Des, you know you wanna break up wit daddy's
2			little girl and git wit me. Come, on.
3		Des:	I don't think so Eddie.
4		Rob:	Man, why don't you save yourself some face- some face
5			and take off before I beat you twice in one night?
6		Ed:	Aight, but lemme ask you a question first. What's it like
7			getting my sloppy seconds?
8		Sleepy:	Hey, break it up.
9		Ed:	Get off me, Sleepy.
10		Tre:	Yeah, Sleepy, hold yo boy back. Look like a big ass Gerber
11			baby.
12		Ed:	You got a big ass mouth.
13		Ref:	Break it up! Break it up!
14		Sleepy:	Let's go.
15		Ed:	This ain't over Donovan!
16		Sleepy:	Alright, chill out!

1	b.	Ed:	Hey, yo. That punk from Westbury's followin' me.
2		WM[28]:	Hey, what's going on? This ain't cool.
3		Ed:	Hey, yo man, what are you doin' here?
4		Tre:	Who, me?
5		WM:	He's got a gun.

The crossing practices in these films can be argued to reflect young Whites in America who, through immersing themselves within black youth culture, have created their own youth subculture (Kitwana 2006). I contend that this can be seen in part by the fact that the accents and language used by the actors reflect instances of their off screen language use and the fact they include both stylized features of African American speech

[28] Stands for white male.

and specific and general nonstandard features. Fine and Anderson (1980) and Harper (2008) considered actors who relied more on general non-standard features and not linguistic features that index blackness to be a negative attribute of the language use of black actors in the media. They suggested that it was the actors' way of appearing "black, but not too black". However, I maintain that when white actors perform blackness, depending more on non-standard features is a positive attribute, because it prevents the characters they play from having a mocking or performative tone in favor of a more realistic one that can actually be seen in their off-screen lives (Lopez 2009).

These two characters illustrate that not all forms of crossing by white middle-class characters in film should be considered imitations or judgments on the group whose language is being 'borrowed'. Because these characters do not use the embodied semiotic features in the same way as the characters in the imitation and de-authentication (see below) categories, they do not have the same semiotic valence either (Lopez 2009). This difference allows the character to indirectly index blackness while directly indexing white youthfulness and affiliation with their black friends within the movie and their own ethnic identity as a member of an outside group. Furthermore, because the characters make use of both stylized features associated with black speech and general non-standard features the language is usually ratified by members of the community. These films seem to suggest that white characters who are a part of the hip hop culture may be utilizing a linguistic style which originates and is influenced by Black culture but does not always parody it (Kitwana, 2006).

5.3.3 De-authenticating strategies

Coupland (2001) suggests that although stylization can be utilized in order to comment on authenticity and inauthenticity, it is also "a form of strategic de-authentication" (435). By de-authentication he means, "a way of meaning that betrays its own artificiality" (347). In this section, I discuss three characters who, I argue, are participating in de-authenticating strategies. As discussed in Chapter 2, stylization is a Bakhtinian (1986) concept which suggests that "our speech . . . is filled with others' words, varying degrees of otherness or varying degrees of "our-own-ness", varying degrees of awareness and detachment" (89). Drawing on stereotypes and ideologies of other groups, stylized utterances are performed to project personas and identities. For the characters in this section, the wigger identity and hip hop are used as a vehicle to reconnect with others and to force people to reflect on race relations (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011). However, in many ways their performance is deliberately artificial in that there is a conscious disassociation between the linguistic representations of blackness and persona they adopt and the 'ordinary' way they speak and conduct themselves. Moreover, they engage in de-authenticating the hip hop and wigger history of being a youth subculture[29].

Two of the three films analyzed in this category are the comedies *Bulworth* and *Bring Down the House* (BDH). These movies pair the European American actors Warren Beatty and Steve Martin with the African American actresses Halle Berry and Queen

[29] The core demographic of the hip hop community are adolescents between the ages of 12-17 (Morgan 2001).

Latifah, respectively. I discuss these two films together because they share a common theme: "a white upper-middle-class man undergoes a midlife crisis, which leads to his personal transformation through the aid of an attractive working-class black woman who acts as sort of racial muse, inspiring him to experiment with blackness" (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011: 691)[30]. In *Bulworth*, the film's protagonist is a jaded U.S. senator named Jay Bullington Bulworth, played by Warren Beatty, who hires someone to assassinate him so that his daughter could inherit a $10 million insurance policy he has taken out on himself. As he is campaigning and waiting to be assassinated, he meets and falls for Nina, played by Halle Berry. Nina and the people within her world help him realize that life is worth living. The twist is that Nina is the assassin, but because of their relationship she does not assassinate him. During the course of the film Bulworth transforms from a "stuffy" politician to one who is more down to earth. This transformation includes a change in attitude, speech, and dress (see Illustration 5.1).

Illustration 5.1. Warren Beatty as Bulworth[31]

[30] Kitwana 2006 discusses these two films during his discussion of why white kids love hip hop.
[31] Images taken from jblo.com and movies.701panduan.com

In *Bringing Down the House*, Steve Martin stars as Peter Sanderson, an uptight lawyer who meets Charlene Morton, played by Queen Latifah, online. He thinks she is a lawyer like him; however, on their first meeting it is revealed that she has been deceiving him and that she is really a wrongfully convicted bank robber seeking his help. Although not a love interest, Charlene teaches Sanderson how to love and through her he learns to become a better father and husband. Therefore, through his association with Charlene and blackness (see Illustration 5.2) he too becomes a better white man.

Illustration 5.2. Steve Martin & Queen Latifah as Peter and Charlene in *Bringing Down the House*[32]

The final film in this section is *Bamboozled*. This film, which was written and directed by Spike Lee, is satirical and focuses on the topic of minstrelsy in modern television shows. The wigger character in this film is Thomas Dunwitty, played by Michael Rapport. Dunwitty is the CEO of a television station called CNS (Continental

[32] Images taken from bringingdownthehousemoviecrackofdawn.typepad.com and fosoria.org.

Network System) who insists on using black speech because he has a black wife and biracial kids. The film is focused on the creation and success of a television show called *Mantan: The New Millennium Minstrel Show* which incorporates black actors in blackface who tell racist jokes while shucking and jiving on stage in front of stereotypical sets such as a watermelon patch. Dunwitty's performance and transformation is different from those of Bulworth and Sanderson's in two ways: 1) he does not use hip hop clothing, but uses blackface similar to that of the blackface characters in Chapter 4, 2) it is dramatic rather than romantic or comedic and 3) there is no black female lead playing opposite of him. Instead his transformation occurs after one of the stars of the show—Manray—is kidnapped by a militant rap group who are unhappy with the content of the show. The group assassinates Manray on live television forcing everyone involved in the show to wonder if producing the show was worth it.

Each of the men who adopts the wigger identity in *Bringing Down the House* (*BDH*), *Bamboozled*, and *Bulworth* are middle-aged white men who have occupations[33] that do not fit with hip hop culture. *Bulworth* and *BDH* open by emphasizing the white male lead's distance from African American language and culture while *Bamboozled* highlights the wigger character's (inaccurate) belief that he knows black people better than blacks do. The younger male characters in the other films analyzed in the present study proclaim the wigger identity as their own throughout the films; Thomas Dunwitty does as well. However, Peter Sanderson and Jay Bulworth do not. Instead they utilize

[33] Steve Martin's character in *BDH* is a lawyer, Michael Rapport's character in *Bamboozled* is senior vice president of a television station, and Warren Beatty's character in *Bulworth* is a politician.

specific embodied semiotics (i.e. night clubs, clothing, dancing/rapping) to frame the stylized language in the film. Taking these aspects of the characters' performances, one question that is raised is whether or not they represent a different type of wigger because they are older.

Although there are earlier instances of dialect stylization (Coupland 2001) by both Sanderson and Bulworth, both of their first extended instances of it occur in nightclubs. In *BDH*, Sanderson's nightclub scene occurs when he is trying to clear the name of his houseguest Charlene. The dialogue from the beginning of the nightclub scene can be found in Example 5.25. This scene is structured in the following way: Sanderson sits in his car observing the activities outside the club for a while and after noticing the style of dress of many of the patrons, he pays one of two 'homeboys' for his clothes so that he can assume the wigger identity. "This costume plays a part in his transformation from an uptight white male (represented by the suit and tie) to someone who is as he says "from the 'hood and mizunderstood" (represented by the hip hop uniform of jeans, throwback jersey and beanie)" (Lopez 2009: 113). Linguistically, his transformation includes altering his voice from a nasalized, lower pitch to one with falsetto phonation. This prosodic change co-occurs with an affected 'black' accent (see chapter 6 for an analysis of this feature by wigger characters).

Example 5.25 *Bringing Down the House*
1 (In car talking to the young men: nasalized voice)
2 Sanderson: Excuse me. Homeboys.
3 (At club's entrance: falsetto)

4 Say yo, you got a bafroom in there? Say yo, what's the dealio? Umm, who's yo'
5 daddy? Back that booty up and put it on a glass. Anybody else dig what I'm
6 sayin'?

This dialogue (which is just him walking around the club talking to no one in particular) contains lexical representations of blackness that index hypersexuality (Lopez 2009). For example, his use of the word *booty* along with the phrase *who's yo' daddy?* is the character's way of making sexual advances toward a female in the club. This interaction fits one definition of the speech event *rapping* in African American discourse and carries the meaning of "creative conversation from man to woman for the purposes of winning her affection and ultimately for getting sex" (Smitherman 1994: 242). Therefore, Example 5.25 can be used to support arguments that the use of stylized black speech by some non-blacks is rooted in the ideology that links black males to a hyper(hetero)sexuality (Bucholtz 1999a; Chun, 2001; Bucholtz & Lopez 2011).

In other parts of the club scene, Sanderson directly indexes masculinity and indirectly links blackness to dancing skills. For example, in 5.26, Sanderson uses language that indexes a specific type of masculinity when he responds to a Latino male's confrontational question with a question of his own (line 2), which can be translated to mean, "Why are you demonstrating envy or opposition to me?" (Lopez 2009). Considering the fact that he is in a nightclub where he does not know anyone, this is a bold and confident statement. A statement such as the one in line 2 can be considered "fighting words". But while he is performing this identity (which is how he acquires his

masculinity) he exudes confidence and self-assuredness, which is in opposition to how he behaves when he is not performing the identity (Lopez 2009).

Example 5.26 *Bringing Down the House*

1	Male:	What's on yo' mind playa?
2	Sanderson:	You been drinkin' some of that haterade?

In Example 5.27, Sanderson's question is rooted in the ideology that associates blackness with the ability to dance. The word 'honky' is a derogatory term for a white person used by African Americans. His use of the word here functions similarly to the way the younger wigger characters are using it—to distance himself from white culture. Yet, instead of applying it to others, he applies it to himself. In making this statement he is saying, 'look at my style of dress, my behavior, and my speech. I am no ordinary white male, I'm like all the other men in here, so of course I can dance' (Lopez 2009). The use of the term demonstrates that he is aware that wiggers appropriate pejorative forms of address used by Blacks towards Whites. Nevertheless, the application of the term to himself instead of another suggests that he is unaware of the way in which the young wiggers use these terms.

Example 5.27 *Bringing Down the House*

1	Female:	Can you swerve snowman?
2	Sanderson:	Do I got Honky spray-painted on my forehead? Of course I can.

Bulworth's club scene is similar to Sanderson's. Although, he first encounters urban life at a black church, the club scene is where he really interacts with other black characters within the film. While there, he participates in stereotypical aspects of black culture such as dancing and eating ribs in order to align himself with the black community (Green, 2002). It is through his use of stylized black speech that he is able to become a politician who is completely forthright and confident instead of one who is more concerned with making everyone happy (Green, 2002). As stated earlier, his white linguistic representations of African Americans mostly consists of him using *rap* in order to 'tell it like it is' (Example 5.28).

Example 5.28 *Bulworth*

1	Bulworth:	I mean those boys over there on the monitor/they want a
2		government smaller and weak./But they be speaking for the richest
3		twenty percent when they pretendin' they defendin' the meek.

During his last delivered speech in the movie, he has totally appropriated the street culture depicted in the film and therefore his style of dress (which consists of a beanie, sunglasses, as well as an oversized jacket and shorts) and gestures also match that of the streets (Green, 2002).

Thomas Dunwitty's performance is slightly different from that of Sanderson and Bulworth's in that he actually lays claim to blackness instead of just disassociating with whiteness. In one scene in the film, he contrasts his own authentic blackness with

Delacroix's[34] lack of blackness by challenging him to identify an African American athlete featured in a poster behind his desk. When Delacroix is unable to do so, he accuses Delacroix of performing whiteness:

Example 5.29 *Bamboozled*

1	Dunwitty:	Brotherman, I'm blacker than you are. I'm keeping it real…
2		You're just fronting, trying to be White.

Although Dunwitty claims to be an authentic member of the community, his claim to black authenticity is weakened by the fact that he believes that *Mantan: The New Millennium Minstrel Show* is something that should be on the air (Nowatzki 2007) (see Example 5.30). He never puts on the wigger uniform, instead he wears actual blackface once the *Mantan* show becomes a hit. This is ironic considering that both his and Bulworth's performances are performed as if it were for white minstrels. Throughout their respective movies, both Dunwitty and Bulworth choose to perform blackness instead of whiteness[35].

Example 5.30 *Bamboozled*

1	Delacroix:	Now, I know you are familiar with minstrel shows. They came
2		about in the 1840's. It was a variety show in which the talent was
3		singing, dancing, telling jokes, doing skits - like *In Living Color*[36].

[34] Pierre Delacroix is an African American male, played by Damon Wayans, who works for Dunwitty and is the creator of the of *Mantan: The New Millennium Minstrel Show*.

[35] Sanderson does as well. However, his performance is limited to one part of the movie whereas Bulworth and Dunwitty's performances are extensive.

[36] *In Living Color* was a television series that ran on the Fox Network from 1990-1994. It was a sketch comedy show that also starred Damon Wayans. Including it in the script was metaparodic.

Dunwitty: Right, right, right. That was dope.

Delacroix: Now, Mr. Dunwitty. I ask you when was the last time there was a great variety show on the air. Carol Burnett[37]?

Dunwitty: Carol was bomb, yo!

Delacroix: *Hee Haw*[38]!

Dunwitty: *Hee Haw* was def!

Delacroix: *Kenan & Kel*[39].

Dunwitty: Yo, that's the stupidest shit on tv, yo.

Delacroix: So I say, let's take this form, this very American tradition of entertainment into the twenty-first century. The new millennium.

Dunwitty: Okay, okay now. What's the name of this show? We need something that we can sell.

Delacroix: *Mantan: The New Millennium Minstrel Show*.

Dunwitty: *Mantan: The New Millennium*- I really, really, like this. You know how I know? I'm getting a boner, huh? Swanson, Johnson is getting hard, you know what I'm saying? I like this. I'm feeling this shit. I like this. I like this. No, no, no. Give me more.

What is established through the analysis of the semiotics in these films is that lexical, grammatical, and phonological features of white linguistic representations of African Americans in addition to dress and stance are used to construct a type of masculinity in order to exude confidence (Lopez 2009). Linguistically, the characters "are being studiedly 'artificial' or 'putting on a voice'" (Coupland 2001: 346). This is illustrated through Sanderson's adoption of a 'black' accent, Bulworth's need to state everything in the form of a rap, and Dunwitty's promotion of the *Mantan* show. Outside of their linguistic performance, the use of the oversized clothes, exaggerated gestures,

[37] *The Carol Burnett Show* aired from 1967-1978.

[38] *Hee-haw*, as its name suggests, was a country themed variety show that aired from 1969-1971.

[39] *Kenan & Kel* was a sitcom that aired on Nickelodeon from 1996-2000. Although a sitcom and not a variety/sketch show, it is similar to the other shows listed in that each show began and ended on stage with the two stars interacting with the studio audience.

and blackface are visually "overdrawn, defining the generic principal of cartooning" (Coupland 2001: 346).

It is obvious that the aspects of the wigger identity that these characters get right are the ideologies that are indexed (e.g. hypermasculine, hypersexual). However, "the fact that these characters rely heavily on distortions of popular culture without concern for authenticity in creating their identity causes their linguistic performances to be questioned by other characters in the film" (Lopez 2009: 115). For example, the dialogue of the first club scene in *BDH* (see Example 5.25 above) ends with everyone in the club staring at Sanderson in disbelief. Furthermore, in Example 5.40, Sanderson is forced to defend himself against the claim that he does not belong there. In this scene, Sanderson is finally allowed to see the man, Widow, he came to see. The first thing that Widow does is comment on the way that Sanderson looks in the hip hop outfit. At first Sanderson rejects his assessment by indexing an African American speech event called *the dozens* which ends in the phrase '*yo' mama'*. The dozens is a verbal duel between two competitors, not unlike that of the rap battle found in hip hop (Abrahams 1962; Green 2002; Mendoza-Denton 2008). Masculinity is again indexed through this action because *the dozens* is usually a male competition. It is only after he is told in all seriousness to quit his performance that he does, returning back to his modal voice and speech style.

Example 5.40 *Bringing Down the House*

Widow: Damn, boy, you lookin' all kind of stupid.

Sanderson:	[falsetto] Really? Cause I got this outfit from yo' mama.
Widow:	Yo, Eminem, cut the wigger shit. I don't think you know how much trouble you in.
Sanderson:	Fine, fine, [Intonation change into modal voice] fine. I'm here to talk business, private business.

The fact that Widow refers to Sanderson as Eminem, a white hip hop artist, and tells him to '*cut the wigger shit'* suggests that Sanderson is recognized as trying to be a wigger although he is not successful at it. Sanderson's overall performance also points to the fact that he is aware that the wigger identity is defined not only by linguistic features, but also kinds of social practices (Lopez 2009). These include dancing, wearing certain types of clothing, and walking in a particular manner. These social practices seem to be conventionalized because they are available to all of the characters. However, the fact that Sanderson consciously draws on all of the resources and the falsetto results in a inauthentic identity typically labeled *wigger*.

Bulworth's performance is critiqued as well. Members of the black community (a young boy asks whether or not the way Bulworth raps is representative of all white people) as well as others in the film (an interviewer asks him why he has changed his manner of speech and dress) question his new style of clothing and speech. This suggests that they are aware that this behavior is out of character for Bulworth and therefore he too is unsuccessful in his performance of this style.

I suggest through the analysis of the semiotics that frame the performances in these films that they help lead to an interpretation of the language of the characters as mocked speech. The mock speech performances of these characters are dually layered in

that they directly mock the speech of wiggers but also indirectly mock the speech of blacks. Their performances essentialize linguistic difference as racial difference and reassert the normativity of white language and culture (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011). Even though these characters frame the linguistic features as their own in each instance they use it, the addition of the semiotics as a way to authenticate the linguistic performance as well as their age and occupation actually de-authenticates it.

Furthermore, in adopting this identity, the characters participate in highly stylized and racialized minstrelesque performances that are temporary. Despite the fact that some of them do not actually wear blackface, the characters in this section are similar to the blackface characters in the previous chapter in that they index whiteness through a participation in minstrelesque performances. As discussed in Chapter 4, minstrel shows relied on specific tools in order to construct a black image. "They used plantation style clothing, exaggerated gestures, ignorant and clumsy language, a stage setting such as a chicken coup or watermelon patch and, most importantly, blackface" (Lopez 2009: 111). The movies in this section can be argued to have updated these images into street clothing, body language such as the pimp strut, 'cool' 'street' language, and a nightclub to set the stage (Lopez 2009). The only thing missing in these performances is actual blackface, and the application of the makeup would make them lose all credibility (Green 2002).

That they do not literally apply blackface allows the humor surrounding the fact that these characters are 'fish-out-of-water' to be foregrounded while the presentation of

black males is backgrounded (Lopez 2009). This permits the white characters that perform blackness to also become objects of parody by the other characters and the viewing audience. This makes these updated, minstrel-like performances more damaging because the stereotypes are hidden behind the pretense of making fun of the white male characters when it's possible that their behavior can be interpreted as making fun of black language and culture (Lopez 2009).

In summary, the characters that participate in de-authenticating strategies can be considered new minstrel characters. Although they no longer use blackface, they participate in many other elements of minstrelsy (see section 5.3) and therefore are part of the lore cycles discussed by Lhamon (1998). Their performances are similar to those discussed in Chapter 4 in that they adopt their personas for a specific purpose in the film and then drop them once they have gained the social good they were seeking. In other words, the characters discussed in this section and the blackface characters both profited from momentarily taking a black position.

The characters who utilize de-authenticating strategies are different from the ones that use the other two authenticating strategies discussed in this chapter in that the white, suburban youths either imitated black culture or immersed themselves within black communities and claimed the identity as representing who they truly were. Furthermore, ideologies of their identities rested on racial authenticity. The characters in this section are also different in that the basic inauthenticity of their performance is enhanced due to their age. This is done intentionally on the part of the filmmakers in order to create humor.

An interesting question that arises from this discussion is: If one reason a character is considered de-authenticated is because of his age *what happens to the young wigger characters when they grow up*? Only *Black and White* gives a glimpse of the wigger characters' lives in the future. The end of the movie jumps ahead six months, presumably after graduation, and allows the viewing audience to see that Raven, one of the female wigger characters may still be performing this identity because she is still interested in black men while Charlie, the other female wigger character seems unsure about which direction to take. On the other hand, Will, the character that participated in immersion strategies and was considered a ratified user of ethnically-marked speech appears to no longer be spending all his time with his black friends, but is coaching basketball. This seems to suggest that the identity can be performed into young adulthood and that even the authenticated characters can stop performing the identity.

One reason the baby-boomers' performances may appear disjointed is because they are the ages of the younger characters parents. A theme that is apparent in these films is a generation gap between the younger characters and their parents (Kitwana 2006). This is demonstrated in films such as *Soul Plane* where a transformation of the son from a nerdy youth who emulates his dad (he dresses like him, speaks like him, etc.) to a hip hop kid who is emulating the black characters on the plane serves to illustrate how 'out-of-touch' the father is when it comes to his children. This theme can also be found in the movies *Black and White* with the characters Charlie, Marty, and Will and *Havoc* with the characters Allison and Emily. At the beginning of the films, there is a distance between the characters and their parents. The parents are either absent due to

work or are critical of the identity that the characters have adopted. However, by the end of these films, the repercussions of performing the identity (i.e. Emily has a sexually traumatic experience, Will kills someone) brings some of the children and their parents together, closing the gap. Therefore, another reason for the performance of this identity can be argued to be to rebel against their parents. This would support Rampton's (2005) argument of crossing being a form of rebellion. Once these characters have no need to rebel against their parents, they have less of a need to perform the identity.

5.4 Discussion

This chapter has described popular white representations of African Americans in film. By focusing on ideologies of authenticity and identity along with authenticating practices of these characters, I detailed the strategies used by filmmakers to construct black and white authenticity. In the first section, I addressed the ideologies of authenticity and identity held by the wigger characters. First, I showed how identity for these characters is understood in terms of Black and White and young and old. The wigger identity is performed by the characters in these films because for them black culture is "cooler" than white culture. Furthermore, it is an identity that can be adopted by them because they are young—hinting at the fact that once they grow up they will drop this identity for another one. Second, I described how the semiotic power of the term *nigga* allowed it to be circulated in these films. When used by the white characters, the term does not hold any obvious racist intent, but emulation of its use by African Americans or as an affiliative term of address and reference (Bucholtz 2011b). Along

with this term, derogatory slurs for European Americans are incorporated within the dialogue in order to allow the characters to ideologically disaffiliate with whiteness.

In the second part of this chapter, I commented on the possible interpretations of the use of stylized features of black speech by these characters. In this part, I suggested that the reason that in some films the use of these linguistic features is considered mock language is because representations of black language hold different levels of prestige and that the semiotic valences are different from those in which the stylized use of black speech is considered accommodating. When the representations of black speech are framed as low in prestige, it is often interpreted as mock language while when it is framed as high in prestige, it is considered accommodating. However, I also demonstrated that there were exceptions where accommodating language was interpreted as mocked language due to the fact that the accommodating language came from a speaker who was not considered an ingroup member of the black speech community within the film. Although not ingroup members, nerdy white characters were able to participate in accommodating language use because the use of stylized black speech represented sincere desire to be a part of the black speaker's world.

The final part of this chapter discussed the authenticating practices of the white characters in the films examined here. There were three strategies in which the characters took part. The first were imitation strategies where the characters were not socially engaged with any of the film's version of authentic black language speakers. Their social world included only other characters considered to be wiggers or characters who spoke various varieties of white English. For white male characters who

participated in these strategies, the claim to language and culture racialized as black reinforces their failed masculinity and is deemed inauthentic and illegitimate. I suggested that this was because the characters were not really involved with any of the black culture presented within the film. Instead, they imitated popular versions of blackness that can be found in hip hop and film. The second set of strategies was immersion strategies, whereby the wigger characters were considered ingroup members of the black speech community within the film. These strategies also rested on a widely circulating ideology of black masculinity as hyperphysical and hypersexual; however, they were framed differently. Instead of using linguistic features associated with black speech to transform themselves, the films began with the characters already immersed within the 'urban' activities of the movie. In these cases, it was not considered unusual for the white males to be using ethnically-marked linguistic features, or to be wearing hip hop clothing because they were surrounded by Blacks who were speaking and dressing that way. Because of this, their performances did not appear minstrelesque. This cannot be said of the characters that participated in de-authenticating strategies. This last set of strategies were de-authenticating in that they were utilized by baby boomers who were too old to be a part of the youth culture embodied by the wigger identity. In adopting this identity, the characters participated in minstrelesque performances that were highly stylized, racialized and temporary.

Chapter 6: The grammar and language ideologies in the performance of blackness

In this chapter, I focus on the linguistic features reproduced by screenplay writers, directors, producers, and actors in order to create white linguistic representations of African Americans. Although, each of these people contributes to the final product, the focal point of the current analysis is the characters. Examining the language of film characters provides insight into the ideologies that exist about the linguistic practices of Whites who use a 'black' voice. In describing the data, I adopt a feature-based approach in order to determine which features are used and if they are utilized in a similar fashion as those found in African American language (AAL) and Hip Hop Nation Language (HHNL, Alim 2006).

Although it may be argued that some scripts contain notations on the type of linguistic features that an actor should use in creating their character (such as orthography that indicates the intended phonology), it is difficult to obtain final versions of scripts and therefore it is hard to determine whether the features that make it into the film are creations of the scriptwriter or improvisations by the actor (Bucholtz 2011b). In some cases, the scriptwriter and the actor are one and the same (as in *Bulworth*) and in other cases the cast are directed to improvise their way through the script (as in *Black and White*). Whether the white linguistic representations of African Americans are created by the screenwriters or the actors, this dissertation demonstrates that different representations are similar in terms of linguistic features. This is possibly due to the fact

that they are all drawing on comparable types of texts in order to co-construct social meaning.

The language ideology of hip hop is based on "urban African American norms, values and popular culture constructed against dominant cultural and linguistic norms" (Morgan 2001: 188). Those who want to participate in the culture must have the understanding and use of the linguistic features of both African American language and General American English (GAE). These features include the ability to recognize the way in which members of the hip hop community extend and invert the semantic meanings of the GAE lexicon as well as utilize the principles of grammaticalization that allow the "grammatical classes and meaning" to be "routinely shifted" (199). Although white linguistic representations of African Americans may rely on the most salient features of AAL and HHNL, the fact that users of these ethnically-marked features draw from both general non-standard features as well as features belonging to AAL suggests that they too conform to the language ideologies of hip hop[40]. It should be noted that although HHNL has been the focus of studies that are separate from those of AAL (Smitherman 1997; Morgan 2001; Alim 2006), and has been argued to have its own grammar, lexicon, and phonology, it is rooted in AAL and is considered a subsystem within the larger system of AAL. In other words, it "can be seen as the submerged area of BL[41] that is used with the HHN[42]" (Alim 2006: 74). When talking about the features of the white linguistic representations of African Americans, I will take it for granted that

[40] As may be obvious, when speaking of the use of HHNL, I am referring to the non-blackface character.
[41] Black Language
[42] Hip Hop Nation

the reader realizes that the focus is centralized on those features that are shared between them and those of AAL. In other words, there will be minimal discussion about the features that both share with GAE.

The goal of this chapter is to outline the lexical, phonological and grammatical features of the white linguistic representations of African Americans. As will be discussed below, although these ethnically-marked features share many of the same features of AAL, they do have some distinct patterns in prosody and stress that separate it (see sections 6.2 and 6.3). Even though there are morphosyntactic features, this style of speech becomes racialized as Black while simultaneously indexing inauthenticity through its prosodic characteristics in addition to certain lexical features used in the dialogue of these characters. Through an examination of this linguistic style, it will become apparent that the purpose of white linguistic representations of African Americans in film is not necessarily to utilize the features of AAL appropriately or even to create an accurate and nuanced portrayal of wigger characters or those who may pass as Black in 'real-life'. Instead the goal is to comment on the stylizations of AAL by white suburbanites by highlighting that because they have limited exposure to Blacks and their culture their performances may be considered inauthentic and unacceptable (Bucholtz 2011b; Bucholtz and Lopez 2011).

6.1 THE LINGUISTIC FEATURES FOUND IN WHITE REPRESENTATIONS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS

6.1.1 Phonological and Morphological Features

Many of the phonological features that make up the white linguistic representations of African Americans are general non-standard features, including word final alveolarization of –ing ([ŋ] → [n]) and consonant cluster simplification (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011). Those vernacular features that are exclusive to AAL particularly those found in HHNL, are the most salient (some may say stereotypical, Bucholtz & Lopez 2011) features (see Table 1) of AAL. Some common features are fortition of word-initial voiced interdental fricatives, postvocalic liquid deletion or vocalization, monophthongization, and regularization of the indefinite article before a noun beginning with a vowel. In other words, similarly to AAL (or Black Hollywood AAL and HHNL), white linguistic representations of African Americans frequently substitutes the voiced alveolar stop [d] for the voiced interdental fricative [ð] at the beginning of words (see Example 6.1). In one movie, I also found the voiceless interdental fricative [θ] becoming the voiceless labiodental fricative [f] (see Example 6.2). In other films, the process of substituting [t] for the voiceless interdental fricative at the end of words was applied by one of the characters (i.e. [wɪθ] vs [wɪt]) (Green 2002).

Example 6.1 *Can't Hardly Wait*

1 Kenny: I mean peep this [dɪs]. They [deɪ] say here that 92% of honeys at
2 UCLA is sexually active. Ninety-two percent of women in Los

3 Angeles at UCLA walkin' around goin' class or sex. (suck teeth)
4 What shall I do? Ninety-two percent, yo!

Example 6.2 *Bringing Down the House*
1 Peter: Say, yo! You got a bathroom [bæfrum] in there [dɛr]?

In AAL, the phonemes [r] and [l] can be vocalized. What this means is that in certain environments these sounds are articulated more like a vowel sound than like a consonant sound (Green 2002). Specifically, they are pronounced like the unstressed vowel [ə] called schwa. As Example 6.2 above demonstrates, liquid vocalization is not always adhered to in white linguistic representations of African Americans; however it can be found:

Example 6.3 *Malibu's Most Wanted*
1 B-rad: I ain't *never* [nɛvə] been with a real black girl before.

Deletion of [r] and [l] are more commonly found in white linguistic representation of African Americans. In AAL, [r] and [l] "may become unstressed to the point to which they are not produced at all" (Green 2002: 120). This process can occur both word-finally and when the liquid is followed by a consonant (Green 2002); although there are a few exceptions (Example 6.4), in white linguistic representations of African Americans, deletion usually occurs at the end of words or syllables (see Example 6.5). As a result, in comparison to AAL, the data suggests that there is a reduction in the range of morphological contexts in which [r,l] vocalization or deletion occurs.

Example 6.4 *Waiting…*

1	T-Dog:	How many fuckin' times I told [t^{h}oud] you man. It's the fuckin T-
2		Dog, yo.

Example 6.5 *Detour*

1	Loopz:	Aw, y'all thought that was tight, lemme show you somethin' right
2		here. You ever seen bubblegum on a barbershop *floor [flo:]*?
3	Girls:	Ew, get that outta here.
4	Loopz:	Aw, yeah, ladies, let it hang low, *for sure [fo ʃo], for sure [fo ʃo]*.

Some phonological phenomena that are restricted to particular words include vowel lowering next to nasals in particular words such as 'think', 'thing', 'sing', and 'drink' as well as –izzle speak (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011) and –eezy speak. Smitherman (1997) points out how the process of vowel lowering is exploited throughout hip hop music because it gives access to more rhyming schemes. Although not used to rhyme, this feature makes its way into white linguistic representations of African Americans because of its popular use in hip hop music has made it notable and therefore a viable resource for the construction of the wigger identity. Additionally, -izzle speak which first made its way into popular culture in the 1980's was later re-introduced by hip hop artist Snoop Dogg ("izzle" 2012). Both –izzle and –eezy are productive suffixes commonly used in hip hop culture. Although the suffix –eezy is used by different types of wigger characters (see Example 6.6), Bucholtz & Lopez (2011) note that –izzle speak is usually used by buffoonish characters in comedies (see Example 6.7).

Example 6.6 *Underclassman*

1	Alexander:	What's up my home pickle? Alexander T. Jeffrey in the *heezy*.
2		I'm trying too hard aren't I?

Example 6.7 *Malibu's Most Wanted*

1	Barista:	Can I help you?
2	Shondra:	Coffee. Black.
3	Barista:	Ok.
4	B-rad:	Hey, yo Chris to the *Bra-rizzle*. Put it on my account. And throw
5		in a white chip *macadizzamian nizza* cookie too.

Other features include vowel nasalization with the deletion of a nasal in a word and the movement of stress to the penultimate syllable (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011). Researchers of AAL have indicated that speakers of AAL shift the primary stress of bisyllabic words where the first syllable contains a consonant and a vowel (CV) and the second syllable follows a consonant-vowel-consonant pattern (CVC) (Smitherman 1977, 2006; Baugh 1983; Green 2002). What happens during this process is that these words are forestressed (Baugh 1983) moving the stress from the second syllable to the first (i.e. políce vs. pólice and Detróit vs. Détroit). This first syllable stress pattern is found in white linguistic representations of African Americans. However, it is interesting that in these linguistic representations, stress is also moved in three syllable words (see section 6.3.5) as well as from the first syllable to the third syllable:

Example 6.8 *Havoc*

Emily:	PLC in full effect.
Allison:	Well, I foresee another night of driving around.
Toby:	We'll get a fuckin' paintball gun and head down to Hollywood [hɒliˈwʊd] and pick off some fuckin' tourists.
Sam:	Yeah, where the B-L-V-D, son? Where the Hollywood [hɒliˈwʊd]?

Although Green (2002) has indicated that she has recorded data that suggests that at least one multisyllable word can be forestressed, "the word *protector* is produced by the minister as PROtector" (132) the movement of stress from the first syllable to the second is not documented in AAL. This suggests that the writers/speakers of racialized linguistic features indexical of blackness are aware that movement of stress is possible in AAL but that they may be unaware of the rules governing the movement. Because of this, they might have reinterpreted the stress pattern as movement from the ultimate syllable to the penultimate or from the penultimate to the ultimate.

In summary, white linguistic features of African Americans share phonological features with AAL. However these features are restricted to certain films and not applied in the same range of environments. There are also times when rules are applied differently from those in AAL possibly through some process of analogy. The fact that there is a focus on salient features and not other widespread features of AAL such as consonant devoicing at the end of words suggests that the goal of the phonology of stylized features associated with black speech is not to provide an accurate account of the phonology of AAL, but to index it. Therefore using only prominent features of AAL or extending rules of the dialect can be argued to be intentional in order to comment on the acceptability and authenticity of those who appropriate the dialect. The following section further examines this point through a discussion of the prosodic features of white linguistic features of African Americans.

Table 6.1 Phonological and Morphological features shared between AAL and White linguistic representations of African Americans

[ð] to [d]
[θ] to [t] or [f]
postvocalic [r] deletion or vocalization
postvocalic [l] deletion or vocalization
monophthonal [aj]
alveoarization of –ing
*[43]penultimate stress
-izzle/-eezy speak
consonant cluster simplification
vowel lowering next to nasal
regularization of the indefinite article
vowel nasalization with deletion of nasal

6.1.2 Phonetics

In the present section, I explain why some of the wigger characters are considered inauthentic by investigating the voice quality they produce. Specifically, I describe the intraspeaker stylistic uses of falsetto phonation by four wigger characters. Although most studies have investigated how voice quality patterns are distributed across speakers[44], the present discussion focuses on the intraspeaker stylistic uses of falsetto phonation by some of the wigger characters. Following Ochs (1992) and Eckert (2008), I look at the social meaning of variation by examining how falsetto is used as a resource for constructing social meaning for the film characters. Drawing on principles of positioning theory (Langenhove and Harré 1999), I illustrate that falsetto is used in instances of deliberate self-positioning and abandoned in instances of forced self-positioning. The co-

[43] Asterisk indicates that this feature is used in ways unattested in AAL.
[44] Podesva 2007 is an exception.

occurrence of position type and falsetto helps illustrate that this feature carries an association with 'blackness' and that this meaning is employed to construct a 'hip hop' persona that aids in building the inauthentic wigger identity. In addition, I will demonstrate that because falsetto indexes blackness in these films and the characters are White, it leads the other characters in the films to consider the wigger character to be 'fronting' or presenting a false self.

Voice quality "refers to the extragrammatical suprasegmental properties of speech resulting from the configuration of the vocal apparatus" (Podesva 2007: 478). Unlike other characteristics of the human voice (i.e. pitch and loudness) that are well-defined, there is no universal agreement on what constitutes voice quality (Li & Yiu 2006; Podesva 2007; Nielson 2009). However, voice quality can be argued to contribute to *style* in that it can be used as a source of authenticity. In their discussion of 'sweet voice' by Japanese women, Starr and Greene (2006) argue that voice quality plays a unique role in the creation of style in that "its status as a feature considered to be beyond conscious control makes it a source of authenticity that may be exploited in perception and production" (38). They find that voice quality was used as a resource to convey the characters' true nature while other linguistic features were possibly used to build false feminine identities.

Falsetto voice is a voice quality where the vocal folds are stretched longitudinally, causing them to attenuate. This results in a high fundamental frequency. Previous studies have argued that this feature is used stylistically in competitive game contexts by Blacks and Latinas. For example, it is utilized by black adolescents in order to protest

during these games (Tarone 1973) and by Latina girls to express an oppositional stance (Goodwin et al. 2002). Furthermore, Podesva (2007) suggested that falsetto can be used to index a diva persona and contribute to a gay identity. Here, I will argue that falsetto is being used stylistically by some of the wigger characters in order to aid in constructing a hip hop persona, but also to index an inauthentic identity.

Movies clips were converted into MOV format and then a sound file was generated from these MOV clips by opening them in iMovie and exporting the sound files to WAV. The sound files were then analyzed using the acoustical software, Praat (Boersema & Weenik 2006). Following previous studies (Greene and Starr 2006; Podesva 2007; Nielson 2009), falsetto was identified impressionistically rather than acoustically because "no one acoustic correlate of falsetto can adequately differentiate between falsetto and modal voice (the unmarked phonation type characterizing voiced sounds)" (Podesva 2007: 483).

Following Podesva (2007) and Nielson (2009), the instances of falsetto were measured in terms of max F0 (Hz), range of F0 (Hz), and duration of the falsetto. Table 6.2 below summarizes the acoustic measure and the method of calculation for each instance of falsetto analyzed. In order to illustrate the difference between the pitch of falsetto and modal phonation, Figure 6.1 provides a pitch track of one of B-rad's utterances while constructing the hip hop persona (since his use of falsetto was the most consistent) while Figure 6.2 provides one while he is not,

Table 6.2: Acoustic measures of method and calculation

Acoustic Measure	Method of Calculation
Maximum F0 (Hz)	
F0 range (Hz)	F0 max – F0 min
Duration of falsetto (ms)	t (falsetto end) – t (falsetto begin)

Figure 6.1: Representative track–B-rad falsetto (hip hop persona)

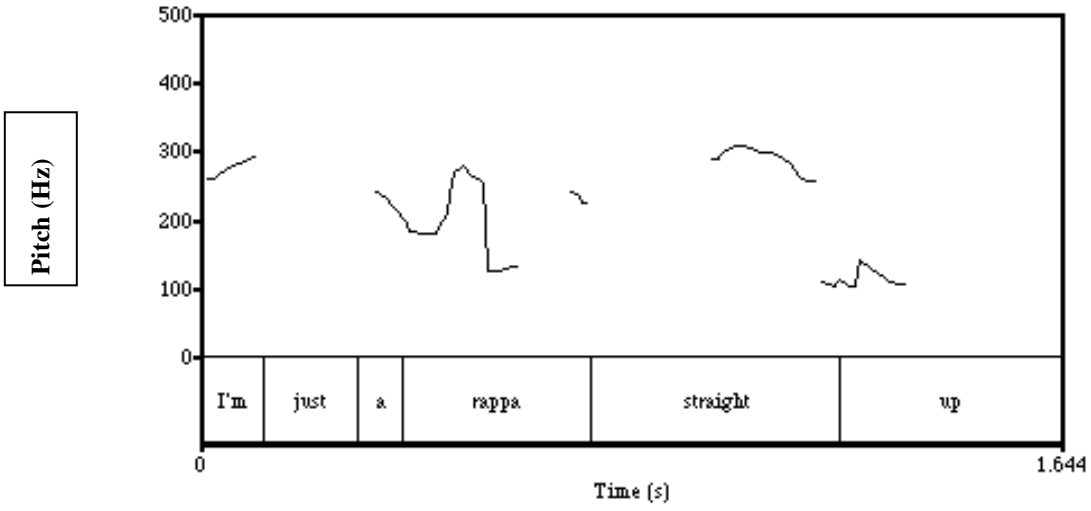
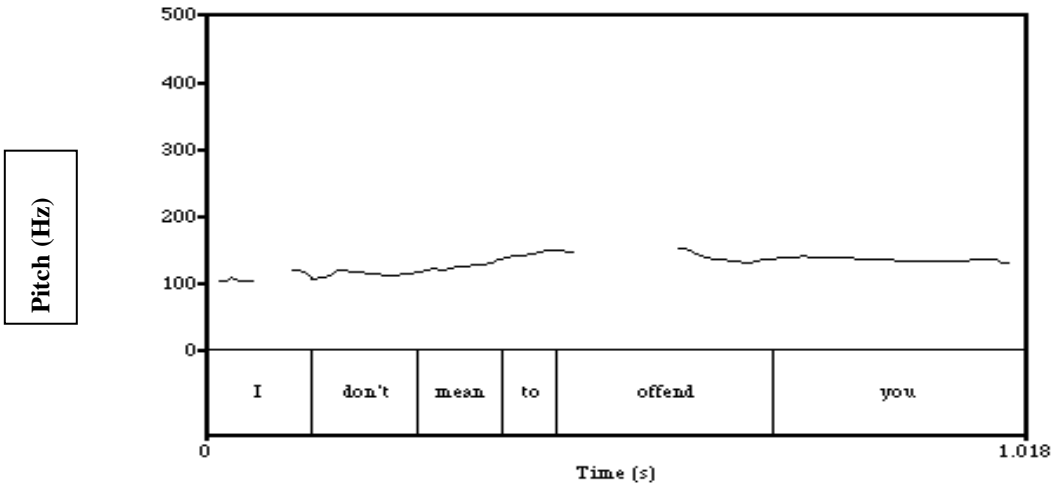


Figure 6.2: Representative track–B-rad modal (non-hip hop persona)



Figures 6.1 and 6.2 illustrate that the pitch that B-rad uses while performing his hip hop persona is much higher than the one he uses in his non-hip hop persona. The utterance '*I'm a rappa (rapper) straight up'* (Figure 6.1) begins with a long stretch of falsetto phonation that continues until the word *up*. In this example, the f0 (found on the vertical axis) reaches its peak on the word *straight* at 305 Hz which is considerably higher than the peak on the word *offend* (Figure 6.2) in the statement *'I don't mean to offend you'* which is 151 Hz.

6.1.2.1 Social meaning

Having discussed the acoustic patterns that characterize the falsetto use of the film characters, I now consider the social meaning indexed by the variable. Drawing on findings from previous research and on an analysis of the discourse functions of the characters' falsetto, I suggest that for these characters falsetto carries a core meaning of

'blackness'. Using Harré and van Langenhove's (1999) positioning theory, I then address how the 'blackness' meaning of falsetto works together with other linguistic and semiotic practices in order to build the hip hop persona and wigger identity. In this framework, positions of speaking and acting are relational because those with authority can discursively position those without authority. One of the essential elements of positioning theory is to determine who in the conversation is leading. This can be done through performative or accountive positioning. Performative positioning involves either deliberately positioning one's self (e.g. projecting personal identity or stance) or others while accountative positioning includes forced positioning of self (e.g. when responding to someone else's positioning) or others.

Nielsen (2009) found that falsetto phonation was used by an African American adolescent when the utterance represented a forced self-positioning. Unlike Nielsen's (2009) finding, the results I present demonstrate shifts in the type of positioning used. There are some characters who use falsetto during forced self-positioning, but some characters who also abandoned falsetto during forced self-positioning. Instead, they adopted a modal voice that represented the non-hip hop and non-wigger persona of the character. However, the loss of falsetto during the non-hip hop persona supports the argument that it is used to construct a hip hop persona.

6.1.2.2 The hip hop persona

Imani Perry (2006) states that hip hop "is an iteration of black language, black music, black style, and black youth culture" (2). Therefore, European American youth

who embrace it participate in a style which would be a first-order stylization of black cultural resources (Bucholtz 2007). However, when these youths are represented in films as cultural types, their language use and other social practices undergo second-order stylizations in order that "they may be culturally recognizable to viewers on the basis of a few familiar indexical forms" (Bucholtz 2007: 5). I label this style presented in the films the hip hop persona because the characters are drawing upon semiotic resources associated with hip hop (e.g. rap music, hip hop clothing, hip hop dance, and hip hop language[45]).

6.1.2.3 Indexing blackness

Scholars have commented on the fact that the intonational and prosodic patterns of black speech differ from that of white speech. For example, as stated in the section on phonology, Baugh (1983) notes differences in stress patterns in which black street speakers would move the primary stress in certain bisyllabic words from the second syllable to the first. Further research has shown wider pitch range in the vernacular speech of black adolescents than the vernacular of white adolescents (Tarone 1973) as well as different intonational contours on questions (e.g., level tones at the end of yes/no questions, and falling tones at the end of wh-questions, Green 2002).

Discussions of falsetto in the literature often describe it as a salient part of black male intonation (e.g. Tarone 1973, Wolfram and Schilling-Estes 1998, Wolfram and

[45] In many cases, the target speech that the characters are trying to reach is AAL. However, because what they end up using is a white stylized version of it, they never speak actual AAL but a white representation of some of its features.

Thomas 2002) which makes it a prime candidate for the construction of the hip hop persona. Yet, despite its saliency, the fact that falsetto is not used by all of the characters (like some of the lexical features are) suggests that it is not considered a salient feature. I argue that since hip hop is considered an aspect of black culture in America dominated by males, the characters in the film appropriate a stereotypical linguistic variable that is recognized as being used by black males as a semiotic resource in constructing the hip hop persona.

Using the theoretical construct of indexicality, I draw a link between falsetto and inauthentic wigger identity. The concept of indexicality supplies linguistic forms with interactional meanings which results in ideological and indirect associations with identity categories (Ochs 1992). For example, Podesva (2007) argues that falsetto may index a gay identity but largely due to the dominant ideology that it is inappropriate for men to perform expressiveness. In the following section, I discuss how the ideological association of falsetto with blackness indirectly indexes inauthenticity that leads to film characters questioning the legitimacy of the wigger figures' claim to a hip hop persona.

6.1.2.4 Constructing the hip hop persona

In the movie *Can't Hardly Wait*, Seth Green's character Kenny is a white middle-class high school student whose hip hop persona is in full force from the first scene we see him in. The movie is centered on a graduation party, which he attends with the goal of losing his virginity. In a scene where he is locked in a bathroom with a childhood

friend, Kenny is berated by her about using linguistic features that she feels does not belong to him.

Example 6.9 *Can't Hardly Wait*

1	Kenny:	[falsetto] Damn, woman. Why you got to be such a raging bitch?
2	Denise:	Oh, please. Listen to you. Look. There's a mirror right there.
3		Why don't you take a look, okay? You're white!
4	Kenny:	[falsetto] What's that suppose to mean?
5		(Denise lifts hands, and smiles)
6	Kenny:	[modal voice] I don't always talk like that.
7	Denise:	Oh, I guess you're okay then.

In the example, Denise first instructs Kenny to listen to himself and then look at himself. The order in which she instructs him seems to indicate that the most salient characteristic of a wigger character's performance is linguistic. The way he looks is secondary. When Kenny positions himself against her claims, he loses the falsetto voice in favor of a modal voice. This shift in style along with his statement that he does not always talk like that is the first instance in the film that seems to suggest that the hip hop persona is not truly his own, but that he is performing this identity. It also illustrates that the falsetto is a part of the hip hop persona and not a part of his 'normal' speech.

While Example 6.9 demonstrates a racialized ideology that suggests a distinction between the speech of Blacks and Whites, Example 6.10 illustrates that there is gendered implication as well (Bucholtz 2011b). Taken together, this movie demonstrates how ideologies of gender and race are often inseparable.

Example 6.10 *Can't Hardly Wait*

1	Kenny:	I mean you said it yourself, you know, you'd only done it like one
2		time before? Like what, does that make you some kind of expert?
3	Denise:	(laugh) I never said I was an expert.
4	Kenny:	I mean, 'cause my shit could have been slammin' with somebody
5		else.
6	Denise:	What?
7	Kenny:	[falsetto] Look, baby. I mean, it ain't your fault you lack the
8		flavor.
9	Denise:	(pause) You asshole.

Although in the scene above, Kenny reverts to speech which represents a truer version of himself, he returns to the use of falsetto and other stylized features associated with black speech when he positions himself as a competent lover and Denise as an incompetent one. Kenny's linguistic return to his hip hop persona includes the falsetto voice along with lexical features of ethnically-marked linguistic features such as *slammin* and *flavor*. It is also suggested from this scene that he uses the persona to hide from insecurities he has about his masculinity and sexuality (Bucholtz 2011b). His entire performance of this persona is interesting in that forced self-positioning can both invoke and retract the wigger identity.

Another character that linguistically abandons the hip hop persona for a brief moment is Jamie Kennedy's character B-rad in the comedy *Malibu's Most Wanted*. B-rad's efforts to live a hip hop thug life in Malibu leads his father, who is in the middle of a gubernatorial campaign, to hire two black actors to pretend to kidnap him. The goal is to 'scare the Black out of him'.

Example 6.11 *Malibu's Most Wanted*

Sean: Aight. I'm sick of playing games with you, Snowflake. Aight, now I'ma give you five seconds for you to be real, or I'ma beat that ass to the curb.
B-rad: What you mean, be real?
Sean: You know what I mean, be white. Five,
PJ: Don't do it, Bloodbath.
Sean: Four,
PJ: Don't do it, Bloodbath!
Sean: Three,
PJ: He gon' do it, white boy.
Sean: Two,
PJ: Kill him! Kill him!
B-rad: [Modal voice] Okay, aight! Okay, fellas, look, I'm really sorry, okay? I don't mean to offend you, you know, I don't mean to front, or act like a thug. I'm sorry.

Similarly to Kenny, the first thing that B-rad abandons during the above forced self-position discursive act is the use of falsetto. This variable is dropped even before he stops using other stylized features associated with black speech, thus the pronunciation of the phrase *all right* (/ɔlrait/) as *aight* /ɔait/[46]. This suggests that for him falsetto is the most salient linguistic feature in constructing the hip hop persona while the other linguistic features are secondary. However, because the character switches completely from falsetto phonation and other ethnically-marked linguistic features to an unmarked style of speech further points to the fact that these features are only used to form a hip hop persona. This can also be seen by the fact that when in the next scene B-rad returns to his hip hop persona in order to convince the black males that the identity is truly his, both the falsetto and other ethnically-marked linguistic features return as well.

[46] This is a slang expression that is formed through the morphological process of word blending (Reyes 2005). Although sometimes used as an adjective, in this example it is used as a discourse marker.

Example 6.12 *Mailbu's Most Wanted*

1	B-rad:	[falsetto] I ain't lying, I ain't lying. I'm sorry y'all but this is who
2		I am. I'm just a rapper, **straight up**.
3	Black males:	Wigger please!

B-rad and Kenny's performances support the argument that falsetto in these films index blackness. When both characters are accused of not sounding like someone from their perceived racial background, each of them abandons the higher pitched voice in favor of a lower one. In each case, the switch to the lower pitched voice is considered an acceptable one for the characters' racial background because the other film characters cease accusations of inauthenticity once they adopt it. This suggests that falsetto in these films is associated with 'sounding black'. In addition, the rapid loss of linguistic features associated with hip hop culture for the use of features characteristic of a more unmarked white style creates a dichotomy between the two identities — one that is considered authentic and one that is not. This linguistic shift is accompanied by behavioral shifts with the non-hip hop persona consisting of a less masculine, less hypersexual, and more sensitive personality. The behavioral shifts demonstrate that racial and gendered ideologies are conflated in these films (Bucholtz 2011b).

Thus far we have looked at characters that construct a hip hop persona through the use of the falsetto and denounce the hip hop persona for a short time in the movie by ceasing to use it. These shifts, according to the ideologies of Hollywood, call attention to the inauthenticity of their wigger identity. In the remainder of this section, I further explore the use of falsetto by looking at two characters who spend half the movie claiming a hip hop persona and the other a suburbanite one.

The movie, *The Bros.* follows two white suburbanites, Pete and Lanny, who believe they have the talent to succeed as gangster rappers. What they do not have is street smarts. In order to gain both street credibility and earn enough money to produce an album, the two decide to embark on an all night crime spree. Since the two characters aspire to become rappers, falsetto and other racialized linguistic features indexical of blackness are utilized in order to create a hip hop persona. However, their performance further indexes blackness by also adopting syllable-timed rather than a stress-timed speech as well as shifting the stress of certain words to the first syllable. As indicated before, these are characteristics of black speech that diverge from white speech (Baugh 1983). However, these characters do not limit the stress shift to bisyllabic words, but include multisyllabic words (see the word *eternity* in 6.13).

Example 6.13 *The Bros.*

1	Lanny:	Believe me, we're going to be pimpin' it like the old school one
2		day.
3	Pete:	[Scoffs] One day? Ten G. That's going to take a fuckin' éternity,
4		son.

Extending the use of the stress patterns of black speech in this way to construct their hip hop persona can be argued to add to the interpretation of their wigger identity being considered inauthentic. It also conveys that these characters may not realize that constructing a hip hop persona should/can be different from claiming an affiliation with blackness.

The analysis of falsetto usage shows that the perceived inauthenticity of these characters hinges in large part on their adoption of falsetto. Indeed, although we see characters in these films who are critical of the wigger figure complain about the wigger's clothing, dancing and rapping skills (Bucholtz 2011b), it is the use of falsetto that represents the wigger's transformation from authentically white to inauthentically black, as most solidly seen in Seth Green dropping the falsetto and explicitly commenting on it when he 'drops the wigger identity'. Once the wigger figures drop the use of falsetto, the use of language is deemed acceptable.

The white male characters from these films claim the hip hop persona as their 'true' identity. However, when forced self-positions call their attention to the fact that their race does not match their speech the characters shift from a falsetto voice to a modal one. It is possible that the reason that falsetto results in an inauthentic linguistic performance for these characters is similar to the reason that Black Creole speakers in Hewitt's (1986) study reacted negatively to white South Londoners who used Creole pronunciation when crossing. Hewitt argues "pronunciation especially is treated as a marker of ethnic membership" (152). He further indicates that those who did not want to appear to claim Afro-Caribbean membership "avoided using anything but white South London pronunciation when employing words which may be marked for ethnicity" (152). I extend his argument to the present analysis. Because the characters use a prosodic feature that indexes an ethnicity that is not their own, they indirectly index inauthenticity. In other words, the problem with these characters from the point of view of the other

characters is that by using the falsetto, they make an illegitimate claim to blackness (Bucholtz 2011b).

6.1.3 Grammar

The grammatical features found in white linguistic representations of African Americans are no different than the phonological features in that they too are drawn from widely circulating features of AAL and HHNL as well as general non-standard features. There are some who argue that restricting the grammatical features of black characters in films to a subset of features used by real speakers of AAL allows the characters to sound "black but not too black" (Fine and Anderson 1980: 406; Harper 2006: 15). I claim the opposite for characters who use imitating or de-authenticating strategies (see Chapter 5). For these characters, utilizing only a subset of widely circulating features creates a more flamboyant use of black cultural and linguistic styles (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011). That is to say, for these characters their style of dress, places of performances, and minimal engagement with black characters who use AAL in the film make them seem more black in comparison to the other white characters although, less authentic in comparison to black characters. Even though there are different results in terms of the performance of blackness, structurally, the outcome is not much different from that of black Hollywood AAL (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011).

One of the most studied and used features of AAL is invariant *be*. This feature is used in AAL in order to show habituality; however, in white linguistic representations of African Americans it is not always used to reflect habitual aspect as it is in AAL and

HHNL. Instead it is used in places that do not indicate habituality as in example 6.14 from the movie *Be Cool*:

Example 6.14 *Be Cool*

a. Raji: Don't *be* puttin' your sucked-on drumstick with my chicken breast. You better keep that shit... I'm serious, man. You better keep that shit separate. The only thing wet on that shit better be the syrup.

b. Chili: Well, if it isn't Flea Diddy.
Raji: It's P. Diddy. Don't *be* comin' up in here like you know anything about rap.
Chili: I bet I know more than you do. You probably don't even know who the Sugar Hill Gang is.
Raji: But I know who the bust a cap in your [jɔʊ] ass gang is.

In the examples, above Raji uses invariant *be* to reflect progressive aspect which is non-habitual. Although it is grammatically correct to use the progressive in the contexts above, I point them out because I claim that they are being used because they resemble habitual *be*. Similarly to progressive *be*, habitual *be* is commonly placed before a verb in an –ing form. Furthermore, in each case, the character could have produced a very similar sentence without the use of *be* by using the present indicative in each sentence: (1) *Don't put your sucked-on drumstick with my chicken breast* and (2) *Don't come up in here like you know anything about rap*. I would argue that there is a possibility that the presence of uninflected *be* in these examples are supposed signal to the viewers that the speaker is in some way inauthentic. However, whether or not the performers of racialized linguistic features indexical of blackness realize that there is a difference between the use of progressive *be* in its uninflected state and aspectual *be*, the hyper-

usage of *be* is used to directly index black speech and possibly indirectly index inauthentic speech.

At times invariant *be* is used similarly to the copula, which is a common misconception that many have about black usage of this feature:

Example 6.15 *Bamboozled*
1 Timmy: Yo, my name *be* Timmy Hillnigger.

The use of invariant *be* in the example above is ungrammatical according to the rules of AAL (although see Alim 2006 and his discussion of equative *be* in HHNL). A speaker of AAL in this context would either say *My name Timmy Hillnigger* or *My name is Timmy Hillnigger*. Ungrammatical uses of invariant *be* in film are discussed in Green (2002). Her discussion focuses on the use of black characters, which seems to suggest that the reinterpretation of this rule is a Hollywood trend and not just a white Hollywood trend.

Table 6.3 provides a comparison of the grammatical features employed in both AAL and white linguistic representations of African Americans. Among the features utilized by both are those that regularize verbs and nouns and multiple negation. Features that are rare or nonexistent in my data set of white linguistic representations of African Americans are verbal markers such as completive *done*, remote past *BIN*, *steady*, and *come*. These features are productive parts of the AAL system; yet, they are not used very often in HHNL. Because of this, my claim is that they may not be considered useful

linguistic resources for the construction of identity of the non-blackface characters as other features such as invariant *be*, which is used quite often in HHNL (Alim 2006).

Table 6.3 Comparison of grammatical features in AAL and White linguistic representations of African Americans

AAL	**White linguistic representations of African Americas**
Regularization of third person singular verb	Regularization of third person singular verb
Regularization of singular/plural	Regularization of singular/plural
Multiple negation	Multiple negation
Completive *done*	--
Zero copula	Zero copula
Invariant *be*	*Invariant *be*
Remote past *BIN*	--
Steady	--
Come	--

6.1.4 Lexicon

The features of white linguistic representations of African Americans that are most commonly shared with those of AAL are lexical features, specifically those found in HHNL. As one might expect, because they come from HHNL, most of the words are slang words or those words that fall out of usage at some point. Other words that are not found to be a part white linguistic representations of African Americans are those that have been a part of AAL's lexical system for generations (e.g. *ashy* which is the white part of skin that results from dryness and *kitchen* to mean the hair found at the nape of the neck). According to Eble (1996), slang is "an ever changing set of colloquial words and phrases that speakers use to establish or reinforce social identity or cohesiveness with a

group or with a trend or fashion in society at large," (11). Hip hop is influential in setting both linguistic and fashion trends and therefore is subject to stylization in order to signal coolness through engagement with urban, youth, and popular culture.

Similarly to the categories of slang found in AAL, those that can be found in white linguistic representations of African Americans are those that label people and actions (Green 2002). However, unlike what was stated in Green, labels for money or opulence (except for the phrase *bling-bling*[47]) were not a big part of the lexicon of the wigger characters[48]. This possibly suggests that wealth is taken for granted by wiggers and therefore there is no reason to comment on it or to utilize multiple terms to describe it.[49] Below, I will both list and discuss some of the terms and phrases that are shared between the two lexicons. These words will include words that are still used within HHNL and some that have fallen out of usage.

6.1.4.1 Labels for people

Green (2002) observed in her discussion of the slang of African American English that there is less terminology used for females than there are for males. Furthermore she noted that whereas the words for women were usually labels, those for men were terms of

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[47] This phrase was created in 1999 by the New Orleans hip hop artist B.G. and refers to excessive wealth usually demonstrated by displays of flashy jewelry (Smitherman 2006).

[48] The word *duckets* was found in the movie *Pervert* by an older wigger character who was a mechanic. However, this character was an unusual wigger character for a couple reasons. For example, he did not wear the usual wigger uniform, but instead wore overalls with no shirt underneath it. On his arm was a swastika tattoo and around his neck he wore a chain. Also, he makes sexual advances toward another male character. This suggests sexual confusion, which is not usually a part of the wigger identity.

[49] There is always a general problem with studying frequencies of specific lexical items in corpora because individual lexemes can be extremely infrequent. It is also possible that if I were working with a larger dataset, I might find more uses of these types of labels.

address. As Table 4 shows, although there are some exceptions, these features resemble that of AAL.

Table 6.4 Lexical items for males and females

Males: buster, crew, dog, fool, G, homie, nigga, player, peeps, pimp, punk, set, son, bro
Females: bitch, boo, chickenhead, shorty, honey, ho, girl, hottie

As is shown in Table 6.4, there are indeed more terms found for males. However, some of these include words for groups of males; such as *peeps*, *crew*, and *set*. Furthermore, although most of them are terms of address (e.g. *dog*, *G*, *homie*, *nigga*, *son*) and some are both terms of address and labels (e.g. *fool*, *player*, *pimp*), there are some words that are just labels (e.g. *buster*, *punk*). An interesting thing to note is that the lexical items that are only labels have a negative connotation. Smitherman (2006), defines *buster* (pronounced [bʌstə]) as "a male who is not with it, who ruins the social atmosphere because he is uncool or fake," (pg. 25), and Urban Dictionary defines *punk* (pronounced [pʌnk]) as "jail lingo for a subservient, cuckolded inmate indebted to another for protection and in return obliged to perform favors both of a sexual nature and otherwise" (joeneckbone 2005). This is also the case for most of the labels for females. While *boo*, *shorty*, *honey*, and *girl* can be both terms of address and labels; *bitch, chickenhead* (a female who can be easily manipulated into pleasing a male, Smitherman 2006), and *ho* [hɔʊ] (AAL pronunciation of *whore,* Smitherman 2006) are labels with derogatory meanings.

The address term *dog* (usually spelled *dawg* in HHNL) is the most frequently used word by the wigger characters to address other male characters. When it is used as a term of address, it occurs at the end of a sentence or phrase (i.e. *What's up dog*? vs. **Dog, what's up?*) which is in contrast to its position when used as a label (*We started swinging, but my dog, Sammy, he got my back and shit. Havoc*). Furthermore, I suggest that the term has different indexical links depending on the addressee. For example, when it is used by a wigger character to a white non-wigger character, it is being used to immediately set up contrast between the two character's speech:

Example 6.16 *Pervert*

1	Mechanic:	What up *dog*?
2	James:	Good, how's it going?
3	Mechanic:	Chillin'. Just kickin' it.
4	James:	Look, um, I'd like you to take a look at my car here. I might need
5		a new tire or two.
6	Mechanic:	Nice ride. How 'bout a rim job?
7	James:	Excuse me?
8	Mechanic:	On the tires. Could use a little bling-bling on the thing-thing.
9		What'd you think I meant?

This film is about a young college student (James) who comes to visit his father. Once he arrives at his father's ranch, we see that the father has a young girlfriend (Cheryl) who soon becomes attracted to James. James and Cheryl become intimate and the father forces her to leave his ranch. However, James' father does not waste any time and quickly finds another young girlfriend who when seeing James also falls for him. We later find out that the reason these women are fawning over James is because he went to a witch doctor before he left New Orleans to come see his father. I provide this back story

because the mechanic also seems to be interested in James. I would argue that it is because of the witch doctor's spell because the mechanic seems to be confused about it and because of this confusion he uses double entendres in order to make sexual advances toward James (*How 'bout a rim job?*). Urban dictionary defines *rim job* as, "an instance in which the tongue is rubbed in a circular motion around someone else's sphincter," (moggie and jd 2002) so it has two meanings: one related to sex and one related to automobiles. Both the mechanic and James seem to be aware of these two meanings, which is why James is taken aback (*Excuse me?*) and the mechanic "innocently" asks the question (*What'd you think I meant?*).

The mechanic's performance of the wigger identity may be done to seem younger and appeal to the college student. As stated in footnote 36, his performance is unusual since he is an older male and does not wear the typical wigger uniform. Because of this, he can be argued to be using de-authenticating strategies (see Chapter 5). He is not a wigger character, but is passing as one. Unlike the other characters, his use of *dog* along with the other linguistic features he uses is linked to a meaning of homosexuality instead of the heterosexuality found in 'homosocial bonding' (Lee 2004), and so it also indexes distance or a 'fish-out-of-water' situation, which is also found in wigger characters who use de-authenticate strategies. But overall, I contend that the main purpose of this word in this context is to contrast the speech of the two characters because it is unexpected of the character. It is not until the scene plays out that you understand why he is using ethnically-marked linguistic features.

When *dog* is used by wigger characters to address black male characters, it is done so to demonstrate failed attempts to elicit solidarity. In Example 6.17 (repeated here from Example 5.15), when the wigger character first addresses one of the black men, he uses the term *dog*. This does not go over well, so he switches to *bro* and his attempt at a connection is rejected once again.

Example 6.17 *Gran Torino*

1	Black male 1:	Come here girl. Don't be shy. Damn, you can't say hi?
2		Why you actin' all stuck up and shit?
3	Black male 2:	Hmmm, hm. What you suppose to be, man?
4	White male:	Naw, it's cool *dog*.
5	Black male 1:	What?
6	Black male 2:	What the fuck you doin' in my neighborhood, boy?
7	White male:	Nothin'. Just goin' down to the corner spot, you know, get
8		some CD's. It's all good, bro.
9	Black male 1:	He just called you bro, (unintelligible).
10	White male:	Come on, it's all good bro.
11	Black male 2:	It's all good, huh?
12	Black male 1:	Man, shut the fuck up!
13	Black male 2:	Call me bro again, and I'll bite yo' muthafuckin' face off.
14	Black male 1:	Yeah, muthafucker.
15	Black male 2:	Now what the fuck you come down here for, huh? You
16		here to bring me this little present. You bringing it to us?
17	Black male 1:	Oriental yummy. Oh, don't worry. I'm going to take real
18		good care of her. Get the fuck out of here.
19	Black male 3:	Get the fuck out of here, man.

Another failed attempt of eliciting solidarity can be found in *Bringing Down the House* (Example 6.18). In his use of the term, Peter is considered both inappropriate through his comparison of Charlene's houseguests to real dogs (*I want you and your dogs to go back to the pound*) and offensive because he does not know the group. His attempt at

justification (*she said dogs and then I said dogs, so I assumed that would be okay*) is spurned. These examples suggest that the first-order indexicality (Silverstein 2003) of *dog* (and *bro* in example 6.17) in these context is one of affiliation or connection[50] and the characters in these examples fail to elicit either of them.

Example 6.18 *Bringing Down the House*

(Peter to Charlene during a house party she is throwing at Peter's.)
Peter: Get out! I want you and your *dogs* to go back to the pound, now.
Party group: What!
Peter: Well, was it *dogs*? Because she said *dogs* and then I said *dogs*, so I assumed that would be okay. Huh?
(They throw him into the pool.)

Morgan's (2004) words in the following excerpt sum up the situation in the above examples:

> Cultural conflict can arise when those who are familiar with communities where they may not share membership use a language or jargon for emphasis, play, or to align with an "outside" identity within the boundaries of their own communities. In this case, the style of speaking may be readily identified as belonging to a particular community, but the value norms and expectations of the source community do not accompany it. What's more, the words and expressions may be used out of context and in ways considered inappropriate and offensive (17).

When a wigger character uses the word with another wigger character or a white character, they are often either participating in a conversation involving sex or violence or are in a sexual or violent situation. This suggests that when they are using it in times

[50] Kiesling (2004) indicates that the word *dude* is used for a similar purpose.

of homosocial bonding (Lee 2004), they are using it to sound tough, scary or mean thereby legitimizing their usage of the word.

Example 6.19 *Detour*

1	Neil:	Help me, please!
2	Loopz:	I think I see him out there!
3	Tara:	No, it's not him!
4	Neil:	Heeeeelp meeee!
6	Loopz:	Sure looks like him, yo!
7	(Loopz runs outside.)	
8	Tara:	Loopz! Wait!
9	(Tara follows with a flashlight.)	
10	Neil:	Please!
11	Loopz:	Neil?
12	Neil:	Heeelp. My leg!
13	Loopz:	Neil?
14	Neil:	My leg is broken!
15	Loopz:	Is that you, *dog*? Look, man, speak up and I'll help you!
16	Neil:	Over here! Man they really fucked me up, you guys
17	Loopz:	Just keep talkin' man! Look, I'm packin' steel! So no one better
18		fuck with me!

In the example above, Loopz and his friends are stranded in a desert after their mobile home breaks down on the way to a rave. At this point, they are trying to protect themselves from a group of cannibals that have begun to attack them. During this scene, they do not know if the person who is asking for help is actually Neil or if it is one of the cannibals pretending to be Neil. Loopz's use of *dog* along with the use of the word *steel* (see section below) has dual indexicality. It indirectly indexes toughness because Loopz is suggesting that he can help Neil even with all of the cannibals nearby and directly indexes violence because he is proposing that he will shoot them.

The use of *dog* is used three times in a violent conversation/context among wiggers in the following scene from *Havoc* (2005):

Example 6.20 *Havoc*

1	Friend:	Qué paso? Homes. Hey, yo, camera boy. Say something, boy!
2		Say something! Pussy. Hey, T. Hey, my pops took out an
3		alligator with this gauge right there. He was like….boom!
4	Toby:	For real, *dog*. This is some serious shit.
5	Eric:	This is seriously illegal. You're not gonna want to be taking film.
6	Sam:	Son, you better turn that shit on. You hear me? Our life is a
7		fuckin' film, *dog*. We a fuckin' film. You the fuckin' filmmaker.
8	Toby:	We' bout to mount up. We 'bout to pay back. That's why you
9		with the P.L.C., *dog*.
10	Sam:	Ain't no 6th street punk gonna be corrupting my goddess! Yo, I
11		would die for that girl. And I would kill for her. That's my word.

In this scene, Sam and Toby who are wigger characters in the film are reacting to the accusation that one of the females in their group has been raped by a Mexican drug dealer. Although *dog* is technically being used as an address label each time it is used in this example, I argue that it is also being used to punctuate the seriousness of the situation that they are discussing. In this way it is similar to a discourse marker.

Finally, *dog* is used when non-wigger characters mock wigger characters. In this case, the word is used to index the inauthenticity of the wigger character because the non-wigger character not only believes that they are using features that don't belong to them, but also that they do not live up to the reputation that they are trying to create for themselves:

Example 6.21 *Detour*

1	Loopz:	Damn man, why don't we just wait for Lee to get back. He likes
2		this violence shit, while Loopz is about the peace.
3	Tara:	Come on, *dog*. Show 'em what a hardcore killer man can be like.
4	Harmony:	Yeah! Tha's right pimp daddy. Jus' show 'em some steel and send
5		them bitches runnin'!
6	Loopz:	Yeah... yeah! Yeah, I'm fucking stone ain't I? Motherfuckers won't
7		know what hit 'em when I barrel crack those bitches in the chin!
8		Hellz yeah.

In the example above, Tara and Harmony make fun of the fact Loopz claims to be peaceful. Despite the fact that this appears to be one of the only things that Loopz is truly honest about, it is not characteristic of gangster culture that wiggers are so fond of emulating. Therefore, it can be argued that Loopz may be stepping out of his performance briefly. Tara and Harmony's mock performances help Loopz come to the realization that his statement is not masculine and he resumes the performance of the wigger identity. The word *dog* along with the phrases *hardcore killer man* and *pimp daddy* is used in contrast to that of *peace* and to emphasize that Loopz performance is usually one that exudes masculinity and heterosexuality.

In summary, linguistic ideologies of the uses of *dog* in white linguistic representations of African Americans can be argued to be pragmatically salient because it functions to comment on youthful identity and sets up contrast between a wigger identity and a non-wigger identity when used by a wigger character to a non-wigger character. When used by wigger characters to black male characters, it signals a stance of affiliation that is often time rejected. Wigger characters use the term amongst one another in order

to index homosocial bonding along with toughness and violence. Issues of toughness and violence are further explored in the following section on labels for actions.

6.1.4.2 Labels for actions

Many of the labels for action and other words that relate to those actions focus on sex and violence. Therefore, in addition to the acts of many of the wigger characters in which they try to present themselves as brave, tough, ladies men, the slang terms ideologically represent these aspects which can also be found in the misogynistic, violent, and aggressive portrayals located within hip hop culture (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011). Table 6.5 lists some of the terms and phrases that function as labels of actions in these films.

Table 6.5 Lexical items relating actions involving sex and violence

badonk-a-daisy	hit
bangin'	ice
barrel crack	smoke
bootylicious	strapped
buck wildin'	steel
bust a cap	packin'
gat	

The word *bangin'* has three meanings: (1) something or someone that is aesthetically pleasing or of high quality (see example 6.22 below); (2) violence related to gang activity; and (3) engagement in sexual intercourse (see example 6.23 below).

Example 6.22 *Bringing Down the House*

1 Charlene: Oh, look at the legs on this wine. I'm telling you, this place is
2 *banging*.
3 Peter: Don't you just mean, this is nice?

4 Charlene: Why the word *banging* make you so uptight?
5 Peter: You know something? You're smart. If you'd just deign to speak
6 English, with what you learned on the internet, and in prison, you
7 could be a paralegal tomorrow.

In this example, it is not a wigger who is utilizing the word but a black female. The use of the word is criticized by Peter who performs the wigger identity towards the end of the film. Most wigger characters adopt the use that refers to sex such as in the following:

Example 6.23 *Be Cool*
1 Raji: Maybe if you didn't blow all your energy *bangin'* tourists, your voice
2 wouldn't sound so flat. Talkin' about a flat voice, you know what I'm
3 sayin'?

Similarly to *banging*, *hit* has both a violent and sexual meaning as well. It also contains the meaning "to go to" as in "Aw yeah. I been drinkin' protein shakes and *hittin'* the gym n' shit" (*Detour)*. In its sexual meaning, it is used in the same way as *banging*.

The words/phrases *bust a cap*, *smoke, ice, gat,* and *strapped* all refer to violent acts or weapons. Eble (2004) comments, "Adopting the vocabulary of a non-mainstream culture is a way of sharing vicariously in the plusses of that culture without having to experience the minuses associated with it" (383). The fact that a significant portion of the racialized linguistic features indexical of blackness used are about sex and violence emphasizes the idea that the characters who experience wiggerhood are trying to benefit from those aspects of hip hop culture without really experiencing them. Words used to describe other types of actions can be found in Table 6.6.

Table 6.6 Lexical items that label actions

trippin'	get jiggy with it
clowning	get one's [noun] on
stop/don't be hating	fronting
feel you	roll
schoolin'	holla
kick it	

6.1.4.3 Now all the wiggers say, "yo"!

In this section, I discuss the use of the word *yo* because it is utilized by all of the non-blackface characters suggesting that it is the one word in the white linguistic representations of African Americans that is most widely recognized by the users of the ethnically-marked speech and the targeted audience of movies with wigger characters. In this way, it is similar to the use of "How!" in Hollywood Injun English (Meek 2006), which along with a raised hand gesture is often used to greet Native Americans in films featuring them. *Yo* is also often accompanied with hand gestures as well.

The word *yo* has many discourse functions in these films. It is used as a prefix to a greeting as in *Yo, what's up with my niggas, man* (*Can't Hardly Wait* 1998), as a lead in to an answer to a question (*Charlie: Oh, ho, ho, ho you in the joint my brother. Hey so what's up for tonight slick? Wigger: Yo, I got some calls out. The Young Unknowns* 2000), in the beginning and end of a sentence as a way to show emphasis (*Yo, check this shit out, yo. Drive-Thru* 2007), as a way to get one's attention (*Yo, dawg. This bag's fuckin' light. Havoc* 2005). However, it is its use as a semiotic resource that is the most

interesting. It is used to establish status as a hip hopper or someone who is a part of hip hop culture; however, the frequent use of the term seems to suggest that the wigger is possibly unsure about his/her status and therefore saturates his conversation with the term in order to prove him/herself to the listener and possibly him/herself.

6.1.5 Speech Events

Many of the linguistic features discussed above along with a heavy dose of profanity are situated within speech events of white linguistic representations of African Americans. Of course, the rhetorical strategies borrowed are those that are most performed by African American men including rap and playing the dozens. Similarly to their purpose in AAL, they allow users to be direct (Spears 2001). According to Spears, directness "is a highly important aspect of African American verbal culture" (240) and I argue that the performers of stylized features associated with black speech have picked up on this and have made it an important part of their performances. The characteristics of directness in AAL are, "aggressiveness, candor, dysphemism, negative criticism, upbraiding, conflict, abuse, insult, and obscenity" (243). These attributes have made their way into white linguistic representations of African Americans—especially aggressiveness and obscenity. In this following section, I discuss the way that rap is utilized by the characters in these films.

6.1.5.1 Rapping

This term has been used to refer to different types of verbal strategies, including "original Old Skool term for strong, romantic talk designed to win a woman's sexual favor; later Old Skool term for strong, aggressive, powerful talk in general" (Smitherman 2006: 185), and how it will be used in the current discussion, "popular songs characterized by rhymes and braggadocio statements put to music" (Green 2002: 136). As stated in a previous chapter, rap music as a genre in film usually serves to introduce a wigger character, to play as sort of a soundtrack to the wigger's performance/narration, or as a jarring tool to shock the audience both inside and outside of the film. For example, *Malibu's Most Wanted* opens with the rap song "Grindin" performed by Clipse which includes the words "the world is about to feel something that they never felt befo'" and a gunshot before transitioning into the song "Get Back" by the 504 Boyz that serves as the backdrop of the beginning part of the protagonist's narration:

Example 6.24 *Malibu's Most Wanted*

B-rad: Growin' up in the [də] streets ain't no joke. There's [dɛz] crazy crime, drugs and mad violence. Yeah, these [diz] streets are tough. But they [de] ain't no streets tougher than mine. The [də] streets of (gunshot) Malibu [mælɪbú]. (shows sign that reads "Welcome to Malibu. 27 Miles of Scenic Beauty") It's hardcore up in the [də] 'Bu y'all. (scenes of the beaches of Malibu) But it's just part of the everyday struggle. Things go down here people should never see. We got bag ladies (shows nicely dressed women carrying shopping bags), big ballers (shows little league team preparing to go on field), everybody's strapped with a nine (shows two men playing golf). This [dis] my ghetto- the [da] mall. Most of the time, the [də] police [pólice] won't even come through. We got all sorts of sets up in here. We got the beach boys (shows three white males dressed in blue- caps, durags, wife beaters, button ups, and chains), the ACCs- the abused children of celebrities (shows four white males in yellow and black clothing similar to the beach boys), and this [dis] is my

crew (two males and a female wearing different colors, but similar types to that of the first two groups. The female is wearing a tank top, a beanie, and a hard look on her face).

B-rad's words, along with the music and imagery illustrate the fact that the image of himself, his friends, and neighborhood is self-imagined. It also points to the way that hip hop and its culture is translated by white suburban males. The rap artists used as a backdrop are mainstream and in a way foreshadow the fact that B-rad's performance of the culture will be dependent upon distortions of mainstream hip hop culture. In other words, the focus is on the interpretation of the most stereotypical features of the culture. Kitwana (2006) points out how the narration is a parody of the narration found in the 1993 gangsta film *Menace II Society* where the character "explains why and how the central character, O-Dog, is a product of his environment, a subject without agency or free will" (121). I would argue that the film's purpose in mimicking this scene is to humorously juxtapose those with insider knowledge about *Menace* that although B-rad is a product of his environment, that environment is not at all gangster. However, one could argue that he too lacks a certain amount of agency due to the fact that he cannot be who he wants to be because of the fact that his father is running for Governor of California and must project a certain image. B-rad may be unaware of this fact as is evident through his first real performance of rap:

Example 6.25 *Malibu's Most Wanted*

B-rad: Yo! What's up y'all? This is B-rad, G. Kickin' it from 'Bu. Representin'! Hi, pops, it's me, B-rad. We all gathered here on this special occasion/ to listen to my pop he's your west coast liason./ A down

> ass candidate so easy to pick/Poke his chad or I'm gonna get sick./ It's the wild, wild west up here in these [diz] streets/and I'm a cowboy pimp when I get between the sheets./ I got the Sally's with the biggest heinies in my stable/and I want to ride them, but sometimes I'm not able./I kiss them on the neck, I kiss them on the mouth/ I move downtown until I go to dirty south.

This performance begins with B-rad driving up to his father's campaign area in an SUV with hydraulics filled with a group of scantily clad, gyrating women. The lyrics of the song along with the banner that he later creates for his father which reads "Gluckman's down with the bitches and hos" are references to images and lyrics found in popular culture hip hop music and videos (Kitwana 2006). This is supposed to represent who B-rad is; however, this image is not something that B-rad's father and his staff feel can be reconciled with the clean-cut image of the campaign. This performance is what leads B-rad's father's campaign manager to hire two actors to kidnap B-rad in order to scare him straight, or in other words scare him white. What's important to notice about this performance is that it demonstrates that B-rad knows very little about even mainstream hip hop performances. It is hard to believe that an actual mainstream hip hop artist would perform this way in this context. They would be more likely to come up with lyrics that were appropriate to the campaign's image and would not treat the event as a music video. Because B-rad's only exposure to hip hop is through music videos, this fact is lost on him. However, the use of this verbal strategy containing those lyrics in this context indexes obscenity, which is one of the ideologies held about rap music and is the primary reason for the use of rap in this and other films in my data.

Throughout the film *Bulworth*, senator Bulworth uses rap music in a similar way to B-rad:

Example 6.26 *Bulworth*

Bulworth: Now the women in the world, they mistreated and abused/But when we try to fix it, we tend to get confused./I got respect for the sisters [sɪstəz], they will tell you that's my style/But there's one thing in politics that always make me smile./I like the pussy, the pussy. I like it really fine/ And when you be a senator, you get it all the time./The young ones, the old ones, I really like them all./And when you be in Washington, you hardly have to call./ The women, they love power, and if you don't pull the rug out/ No matter what you say or do, they give you nappy dugout.

What separates *Bulworth* from films such as *Malibu's Most Wanted* is that it comments on what necessitates the presences of obscenity in rap music (6.27):

Example 6.27 *Bulworth*

Interviewer: Senator, why this new campaign style? Why this new manner of dress and speech? Your ethnic manner of speech, your clothes? The use of obscenity?

Bulworth: Obscenity? The rich is gettin' richer [rɪʧə] and richer and richer, while the middle class is gettin' more [mo:] poor [po:]. Just makin' billions and billions and billions and billions and billions and billions of bucks./ Well, my friend, if you weren't already rich, that situation sucks. The-the richest motherfucker [məðəfʌkə] in five of us is gettin' ninety-fuckin'-eight percent of it. /And every other motherfucker in the world is wondering where the fuck we went with it. Obscenity? I'm a senator. I got to raise 10,000 dollars every day I'm in Washington. I ain't gettin' it in South Central. I'm gettin' it in Beverly Hills. So I'm votin' in the senate the way they want me to and I'm sending them my bills. But we got babies in South Central dying as young as they do in Peru. We got public schools that are nightmares. We-we got a congress that ain't got a clue. We got kids with submachine guns. We got militias throwing bombs. /We got Bill just gettin' all weepy; we got Newt blamin' teenaged moms. We got factories closing down.

Where the hell did all the good jobs go? Well I'll tell you where they all went. My contributors make more profits, makin'-makin'-makin', hiring kids in Mexico. Oh a brother [br ʌðə] can work in fast food if he can't invent computer games/but what we use to call America that's goin' down the drains. How's a man goin' to meet his financial responsibilities workin' at motherfuckin' Burger King? He ain't! And please, don't even start with that school shit. There ain't no education goin' on in that motherfucker [məðəfʌkə]. Obscenity?

In the examples above, Bulworth is able to be openly lustful, comment on gender inequality (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011) and tell the truth about the situation of black people (Green 2002; Lopez 2009). Rappers are expected to be truthful in their lyrics (Smitherman 1997; Kitwana 2006; Morgan 2001) and some forms of rap are expected to comment on the sociopolitical circumstances that affect African Americans (Smitherman 1997; Alim 2006). It is "a contemporary response to conditions of joblessness, poverty, and disempowerment" (Smitherman 1997: 4) and Bulworth comments on all of those things in the example above and suggests that although his new style of speech is riddled with profanity it is necessary in order to characterize the living conditions of African Americans. His point in 6.27 is that there should be less focus on the words he is using and more focus on his message. Although it is obvious throughout the movie and the examples above that Senator Bulworth is not successful at appropriating hip hop, the movie is exceptional in that it demonstrates that hip hop is "the most viable arena for correcting America's unresolved race relations" (Kitwana 2006: 119).

Rap music also serves to highlight female promiscuity. Many of the scenes that have males rapping in them also showcase scantily clad women. The movie *Black and*

White opens with three young boys (one who is rapping) sneaking to watch two of the female wigger characters have sex with a black rapper in the middle of a forested area. There are also instances where young white females who have romantic ties to the wigger males quote rap lyrics in order to make sexual advances (Example 6.28a) or to become sexually empowered (Example 6.28b):

Example 6.28 *Havoc*

1	a.	Allison:	Hey Toby. (Singing Tupac song while dancing sexily and
2			lifting her shirt) How do you want it? How do you feel?
3			Come up as a nigga in cash game, livin' in the fast lane;
4			I'm for real.
5		Sam:	You betta go get it dog.
6		Allison:	(Singing Tupac song while grinding on Toby) How do you
7			want it? How do you feel? Come up as a nigga in the cash
8			game, livin' in the fast lane; I'm for real.
9		Toby:	Ah! That's my bitch. Y'all hear that shit?
10		Allison:	I'm his bitch.

1	b.	Allison and Emily:	(Rapping Jay-z) You ain't gotta be rich but fuck
2			that/How we gonna get around on your bus pass/
3			For [fo:] I put this pussy on your mustache/Can you
4			afford me?/My niggas breadwinners, never poor
5			[po:]/Ambition gets me so horny./Not the fussin and
6			the frontin/If you got nothing, baby boy, you betta
7			get up, get out and do some./Shit, I like a lot of
8			Prada [pəradə], Alize and rock,/Late nights,
9			candlelight, can I get a cock?

In the first example above, Allison quotes rap artist Tupac taking on the role of sexual aggressor. With such lyrics as, "love the way you activate your hips and push your ass out," "tell me is it cool to fuck?" and "positions on the floor it's like erotic," the song *How do you want it* is very suggestive. The singing of this song relies on 'triple

indexicality' (Reyes 2005). By singing a song by a male rapper Allison links her aggression to masculinity. The fact that she sings the entire chorus when she could have just sung the first two lines to get her point across also allows her to link sexuality to blackness through the use of the phrases "How do you want it? How do you feel?" in conjunction with the word *nigga*. As a white female, she is able to benefit from the stereotype of the aggressive, hypersexual African American portrayed in popular culture. This allows her to be empowered. This empowerment is carried over into another scene where Allison raps with her best friend Emily. The song that they are singing is a Jay-Z song, however the verse that they choose to sing from that song is by female rap artist Amil. In these lyrics, Amil raps about needing a man who is ambitious and a breadwinner because she does not come cheap. By quoting these lyrics, Allison and Emily are evoking this message. Putting the verse from Jay-Z's song alongside that of the chorus from Tupac's song communicates that their romantic interests can buy sexual favors from them.

All of the films make use of rap in a way that reinforces the widespread cultural ideologies about black masculinity being hypersexual and hyperphysical (Chun 2001; Lopez 2009; Bucholtz and Lopez 2011). In doing this, they draw on ideologies about rap music being obscene. Certainly there are aspects of rap music that can be argued to be profane; however, the representation of rap music in the wigger performances in these films is reductive. None of the characters in any of the films are efficacious in their participation in rap music. However what these movies expose is the influence that hip hop culture has had on white America.

6.2 DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I have highlighted the linguistic features reproduced by screenwriters, directors, and actors in order to produce a racialized speech style. As has been illustrated, the range of features is limited to ones that would be immediately recognized by mainstream audiences as indexing blackness. Thus, white linguistic representations of African Americans illustrate Lippi-Green's (1997) argument that, "film uses language variation and accent to draw character quickly, building on established preconceived notions associated with specific regional loyalties, ethnic, racial or economic alliances" (81). Unlike other dialects represented in film, it is believed that actors are not required to obtain a dialect coach in order to approximate either black or white representations of African Americans (Bucholtz 2011b). This seems to suggest that there is an ideology in the Hollywood community that AAL is more attainable to both African American and European American actors than other dialects of English.

As a stylized performance, white linguistic representations of African Americans in these films vary at the level of the individual character and across characters (Bucholtz 2011b). Variation in crossing is found in 'real-life' cases as well. For example, Rampton (2005) distinguishes three types of Creole crossing: "minimal, extensive but jocular, and extensive and serious" (204). Similarly to the present study, the crossing by many of his white informants was usually minimal and performed by those who had limited exposure to Blacks. The wigger character in the movie *Gran Torino* (see Example 6.17) can be considered a member of this category because his use of stylized linguistic features indexical of blackness were limited to the lexical features *cool*, *bro*, and *dog*.

Furthermore, most of characters in this dissertation are similar to those found in Rampton's extensive but jocular category in that they too used the forms that the minimal crossers used (especially *yo* and *dog*) but also incorporated other features such as phonological segments. B-rad and Kenny in the movies *Malibu's Most Wanted* and *Can't Hardly Wait* can be placed in this set (see Section 6.1.24) because their language use was more extensive than those in the previous group and were often read as humorous. On the other hand, not many of the characters can be argued to be a part of Rampton's extensive and serious group. Members of this group display extensive knowledge of the linguistic features of the outgroup variety in their crossing. The characters in this group were those who participated in immersion authenticating strategies (see Chapter 5).

Although there was variation, users of these ethnically-marked linguistic features seem to converge on certain selected features on which they base their stylizations of AAL. For example, the phonetic description establishes that there is inconsistent use of falsetto because not all characters utilize it; yet those that do use it use it in the same way—to index blackness through a hip hop persona. Furthermore, the fact that the words *dog* and *yo* are a part of the vocabulary of almost all of the non-blackface characters suggests that these words form "a common, beyond which more elaborate endeavours could be developed" (Rampton 2005: 205) and in some cases their *acts of identity* have become more consistent or *focused* (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller 1985). The regular use of these lexical features may be what audiences use to identify a particular subset of white linguistic representations of African Americans.

The fact that there are features that are utilized in ways not found in HHNL and AAL can suggest two things: 1) that the creators of the films are not aware of the rules of AAL or 2) the new features have roots in AAL but are diverging from it. Bucholtz (2011b) argues that "linguistically, this style bears very little resemblance either to AAE itself or how most European American participants in hip hop actually speak " (259). To be certain, the style does come from stylizations of *media* representations of blackness, which is why it possibly looks dissimilar to some everyday uses of the features by 'real-life' speakers. However, is it also possible that it is not supposed to look similarly to the style used by most "European American participants in hip hop", but like the style used by the smaller group of European Americans who stand out because they have very little exposure to authenticated users of the linguistic features. One such case is Mike, the subject of a study by Cutler (1999) who for a certain period in his life used linguistic features associated with black speech every day. Like the characters in the present study, Mike had higher usages of racialized phonological and lexical features and limited racialized grammatical features. Fought (2006) has proposed that a possible reason for this pattern is limited exposure to African Americans, which prevents the acquisition of the harder syntactic component of AAL. This would suggest that rap music, which is how these characters and Mike acquired the ethnically-marked features, was not a conducive environment for learning grammatical features (Fought 2006).

Depicting and exaggerating these speakers may possibly be considered more humorous than those who represent the larger group because they are exceptional in their language use. Moreover, I contend that although white representations of African

Americans started out as appropriating or parodying blackness it has begun to be stylized as white and is recognizable as such. In other words, it is something that is inauthentically black, but authentically white. Therefore, I maintain that there is some evidence that white linguistic representations of African Americans are moving away from just pure appropriation and parody. I think that there is something to the claim that these are identities that "perform blackness" but "form whiteness" (Bucholtz & Lopez 2011).

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Dissertation Questions: Implications for the study of authenticity

The previous discussion has provided a descriptive analysis of how wigger characters, blackface characters, and characters that are argued to represent ratified speakers performed racialized linguistic features indexical of blackness. In this chapter, I present an overall picture of the ideologies of racial (in)authenticity in Hollywood by returning to the questions I introduced in the opening section of the dissertation.

7.1.1 Which features are characteristic of the white linguistic representations of African Americans?

This study demonstrates that among all of the semiotic resources available (e.g. clothing, gestures, etc.) language is the most useful device in constructing the identities of the blackface and wigger characters. As I lay out in Chapter 6, the characters in these films draw on features associated with black speech. Additionally, in chapter 6, I reveal four findings about of the use of stylized features associated with black speech. First, I argue that widely recognizable features are used that suggest that that the linguistic practices of these characters depend on a set of essentialized features that specifically draw from AAL, HHNL, and GAE. Next, I note that no character utilizes all of the features. For instance, some characters perform the wigger identity with the use of falsetto phonation (Section 6.1.2.4) while others do not. Yet, the third finding demonstrates that there are some features, specifically the lexical features *yo* and *dog*,

that seem necessary in the performances of the characters that participated in imitation, and emulation practices (Sections 6.1.4.1 and 6.1.4.3). This is evident in the fact that even the non-wigger characters, who through double-voicing (Goffman 1981) mocked the wigger characters and their identity (Example 4.15; Example 6.21), adopted *yo* and *dog* in their performances. The consistent choosing of these words over other possible words by the characters display their identity, implying that there was possibly an indexical (Ochs 1992) relationship between these words and the social meaning of a subset of these characters.

Finally, since a hip hop persona is part of the wigger identity, it is not surprising that a another finding is that rap music plays a prominent role in the performances of the wigger identity. Rap appears in quotations of rap lyrics by popular rap artists, creation of rap lyrics by specifically for and by the wigger characters, and soundtracks of rap lyrics that served as the backdrop of the wigger activities (e.g. smoking, drinking, having sex, etc.). In their stylizations of hip hop, the characters are portrayed as focusing on the verbal practice of the culture because of its saliency and underrepresented all other aspects of it. Moreover, by concentrating on the obscene nature of hip hop at the exclusion of all of other forms, obscenity becomes iconic of rap music in these films and encourages erasure (Irvine & Gal 1995; Irvine 2001) of other elements such as the socially conscious messages found in many rap songs. In answering my second question, I discuss other aspects of the ideological dimensions of the stylizations of AAL.

7.1.2 What ideologies about language, race, and gender are circulated by these performances?

Stylization may often appear to be just for entertainment and amusement; however, it is it is also a useful instrument for highlighting strained relationships between different social groups in such a way that allows the tension to reemerge for reexamination (Coupland 2009). Examining popular representations of certain identities can reveal "how complex and ambivalent performances can connect with deep-seated language-ideological investments," (Coupland 2009: 292). In this dissertation, I suggest that the white linguistic representations of African Americans perpetuate ideologies of AAL and black culture as iconic of authenticity, adolescence, and physicality and white culture as emblematic of tediousness, awkwardness and privilege. Therefore these performances appear to be "linking linguistic differentiation with social distinctiveness at many levels" (Irvine 2001: 32) making them *ideologies of differentiation*.

As the list of ideologies demonstrates, these performances are indexically linked to various social dimensions of identity, specifically race, gender and language. The fact that many of the characters are challenged for their use of ethnically-marked linguistic features suggests, that unlike what Raven argued in Example 5.1, people hold the belief that the way people sound is supposed to correspond to the way they behave or look. Therefore, these beliefs in the films create a racial dichotomy that indicates that black people use AAL and white people use GAE. This ideology is seen most in my discussion of self-positioning (Chapter 6) where wigger characters are considered inauthentic when performing racialized linguistic features indexical of blackness but authentic when

performing GAE. This aspect of the films reinforced racial ideologies through *iconization* (Irvine & Gal 1995; Irvine & Gal 2000; Irvine 2001). In other words, racialized linguistic features indexical of blackness are linked to being inauthentically white while GAE is linked to being authentically white. Thus, there is an expectation that a person's semiotic practices, including speech, match with their perceived racial identity. This includes their skin color and the way they dress.

The performances also reinforced gendered ideologies through iconization. When performing white linguistic representations of African Americans the characters' actions reflect hypermasculinity and hyperphysicality. This was seen in movies such as *Drive-Thru* in whic the wigger characters use stylized features associated with black speech while wielding guns and 'trash talking'. It was also seen in the movies such as *Havoc* where the female wiggers directly index aggressiveness while they indirectly index masculinity through the quotation of rap lyrics (see Chapter 6). This indexical relationship is explained by Kim in the movie *Black and White* in her answer to a question about what she meant by a quotation of the rapper Lil Kim: "*Well I'm just saying, like guys for so long have just been taking what they want just getting their come on so it's time girls fuckin' get their come on*." Stated differently, similarly to guys, girls need to go out and get what they want in life.

The wigger characters in these films consider two facets of black culture to be the most authentic—hip hop and 'gangster' style. These are the only two styles performed by these characters when using racialized linguistic features indexical of blackness, making invisible other aspects of African American culture. Consequently, through the

semiotic process of *erasure* (Irvine & Gal 1995; Irvine & Gal 2000; Irvine 2001), variation within the culture is disregarded and there is reduction of blackness to hip hop and gangster style. In Chapter 5, I quote several examples of metapragmatic discussions that imply that white children perform blackness because they are bored with white culture (Example 5.4) and admire the black community (Example 5.1) since "everything good came from black people". Furthermore, these characters outright state that these white linguistic representations of African Americans are transitory, insinuating that they have the freedom to adopt the wigger identity while they are young. This sentiment is reinforced by the de-authenticating performances of the older wiggers. Therefore, Chapter 5 shows that certain performances of stylized features associated with black speech are used to represent authenticity and adolescence.

Finally, the fact that the actors who play these characters are not required to meet with a dialect coach in order to learn how to utilize these ethnically-marked linguistic features contributes to an ideology that AAL can be more easily performed than other dialects of English (Bucholtz 2011b). The positioning of AAL as inferior to standard English is reinforced by movies such as *Bringing Down the House* and *Bulworth,* in which hyperwhiteness is placed alongside hyperblackness. In these movies, the protagonists question the legitimacy of black speech while utilizing it to reach their fullest potential (Lopez 2009; Bucholtz & Lopez 2011). Through the use of these racialized features these characters transform from single, physically awkward, insecure middle-aged men into cool, self-assured men in relationships.

7.1.3 How are particular performances constructed as authentic or inauthentic?

The chapters in this dissertation have examined the various ways in which authenticity is constructed through discourse. That is, I have examined how authenticity is not an empirical fact about the world but the product of semiotic practice. In Chapter 5, the issue of authenticity becomes apparent through analyses of metapragmatic discussions amongst the wigger characters and between other characters. Why these characters behaved this way and whether their behavior was reflective of their perceived racial identity is of primary concern. In Chapter 6, the discussion of the adoption of the prosodic feature, falsetto answers questions about why some wiggers are considered inauthentic. In answering the question of how particular performances are constructed as authentic or inauthentic, I will summarize the findings related to authenticity in these chapters.

In Chapter 5, I provide examples of wigger characters engaging in explicit ideological commentary on the construction of an authentic identity. This is most clear when the characters are reading race. Although the wigger characters are criticized for their use of *nigga*, they justify their use of it by claiming authenticity through racial associations (e.g. Example 5.8 and 5.9). Wigger characters also claim authenticity through the adoption of racial terms such as *whitey* and *cracker*. The use of these features actively produces new forms of identity through language by attempting to disrupt naturalized associations between specific linguistic forms and special social categories such as race (Bucholtz & Hall 2005).

Chapter 5 also discusses the authenticating practices of some of the characters in these films. In some cases, wigger characters imitate the language and culture of blacks found in popular representation while in other cases characters, considered to be ratified users of the linguistic features, immerse themselves within the black community presented in the film. At times these practices are interpreted by the other characters in the films as mock performances (Example 5.16) while at other times they are considered performances of accommodation (Example 5.18). The fact that performances can be accepted or rejected by viewers/hearers of the performances suggests that when dealing with the ownership of speech a speaker needs to be able to navigate effectively in the performance space (Coupland 2003) in order to be considered authentic.

Through an examination of performative and accountative positioning of these characters, Chapter 6 indicates that effectively navigating the performance space was not easy. In an attempt to authenticate their speech, some characters (Example 6.9 and 6.11) adopt falsetto phonation claimed to be linked to blackness. However, once they are challenged, they shift to a modal voice (Example 6.10 and 6.11) that can be argued to represent their perceived racial identity. Depending on the stances expressed by characters in the films, the wigger characters who utilized falsetto alter their performance, implying that identity is "in part a construction of others' perceptions and representations" that is "best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices" (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 586). An emergent approach challenges those views of identity that propose that it is purely psychological.

One traditional idea of authentic language is that it has to be fully-owned and unmediated, meaning that, in Goffman's (1981) terms, the speaker of authentic language would have to be the animator, author and principal of his or her language (Coupland 2003). This would eliminate the blackface characters presented in Chapter 4 who are always the animator but rarely the author and never the principal of their language (Example 4.1). Creating a distance or gap between themselves and their performances is also a strategy of the de-authenticating characters in Chapter 5. Both the blackface characters and the de-authenticating wiggers performed these identities for a short time in order to obtain a social good from the identity (Example 5.14).

Each of these performances has the potential to be offensive to the other characters in the film as well as the viewing audience. However, not all of them are perceived by these groups in this way. Therefore, scrutinizing the role of the speaker is useful in determining why some performances are successful at not offending while others are not. In this section, I have reiterated the idea that some linguistic performances are considered mocked performances while others are considered accommodating. In Chapter 5, I establish that a possible reason for the different interpretations has to do with the way in which AAL and its users are framed in a particular context. The two contexts that are introduced are ideological—classifying the membership of a speaker and determining the level of prestige—and interactional—conveying the immediate goals of the speaker. This analysis supports Coupland's (2003) claim that identity is more than just asserting or ascribing membership of a social group and that authenticity needs to be earned instead of credited.

In Chapters 4 and 5, I highlight that the difference between the blackface characters and the non-blackface characters is that the blackface characters were participating in differentiation or distinction (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). This is accomplished by the screenwriters giving the blackface character the participant role of animator, but not author or principal. Having the other characters in the films speak through them (i.e. through the use of daydreams) or having the blackface characters adopt the linguistic features of the other characters distanced them from the stigma of traditional blackface characters. Each of the analyses of these media representations of authenticity suggests that authentication is a "discursive work in progress, achieved in particular as well as in repeated episodes of social interaction" (Coupland 2009: 287). Additionally, it communicates the idea that authenticity is constructed.

7.2 Other Future Directions: How other ethnicities are constructed as engaging in (in)authentic racial practices

The goal of this dissertation has been to provide some insight into how identity is constructed as racially authentic. One direction for future research has to do with the notion of appropriation. Previous research on mock speech has assumed a "real" variety and then a fake or borrowed and thus distorted use of it. This is a problematic perspective because it assumes that a "real" thing has been borrowed, even in a distorted fashion. The current study has not done much to alter this view. However, my proposal—that white linguistic representations of African Americans and the social practices that go along with it is a Hollywood representation based on a white, suburban,

vernacular dialect that can be argued to be a part of a white, suburban culture and identity in addition to a distorted form of AAL and black culture—begins to take the discussion in the direction of changing this view. This argument would have certain implications for both sociolinguistics and society.

The idea that there can be multiple readings of these semiotic practices raises the question of who has the right to perform ethnically marked vernacular dialects. Or more specifically, how "rights" are constructed through our discourse. For many sociolinguists, vernacular ways of speaking connote values of authenticity that point to contexts where a speaker was first socialized (Coupland 2009). Arguing that white linguistic representations of African Americans are based on a vernacular dialect that is acquired by young, white children in local (suburban) areas where vernacular dialects are argued not to exist, disrupts this belief. This argument does not need to disregard those instances where white children are trying to "act Black" and are appropriating aspects of black culture. What it would need to consider is whether the narratives of the characters in these films and the real life people they represent are more complex than have been previously indicated. A project that concentrates on these elements would begin to move the discussion away from arguments that insist that the only way that white children fit into the multicultural space of hip hop is through appropriating black youth culture and will instead need to argue that they have created their own subculture within hip hop and thus have become a part of black musical culture.

Another area worth considering that is beyond the scope of the present study concerns whether these representations of wiggers are considered (in)authentic to

consumers of these films. It would be interesting to see what viewing audiences thought about the portrayals of these characters. The quotes from YouTube in Chapter 4 of the present study have already provided a small window into the perspectives of some audience members. However, conducting a media reception study can provide another dimension of the construction of authenticity by revealing whether Hollywood "got it right." In other words, it can communicate whether or not the viewing audience accepts Hollywood's representation of these character types. This type of study can offer insight into the relationships between films and their audiences and bridge a gap between my linguistic study and film studies.

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